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featuring

MARADA THE SHE-WOLF
by Chris Claremont & John Bolton

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FEBRUARY 1982 VOL. 1, NO. 10

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We sing.
And we sing loud.
The song fills our hearts,
even after millenia
of hard singing and sounding
in the Zones of the Sea.

We came to this Earth
during the Great Migration,
when the folk of the Whale Planet
colonized the galaxy.
But here the gravity enslaved us,
dragging us down from the sky,
to vibrate sounds
in the Zones of the Sea.

On and on it goes.
It is life.
It is dream.
It is exquisite mirage.
But not until a man from Earth
journeys to the Whale Planet
and meets Abraxas,
will we be delivered
from the Zones of the Sea.

—a song of the humpback whale

written and illustrated
by
RICK VEITCH

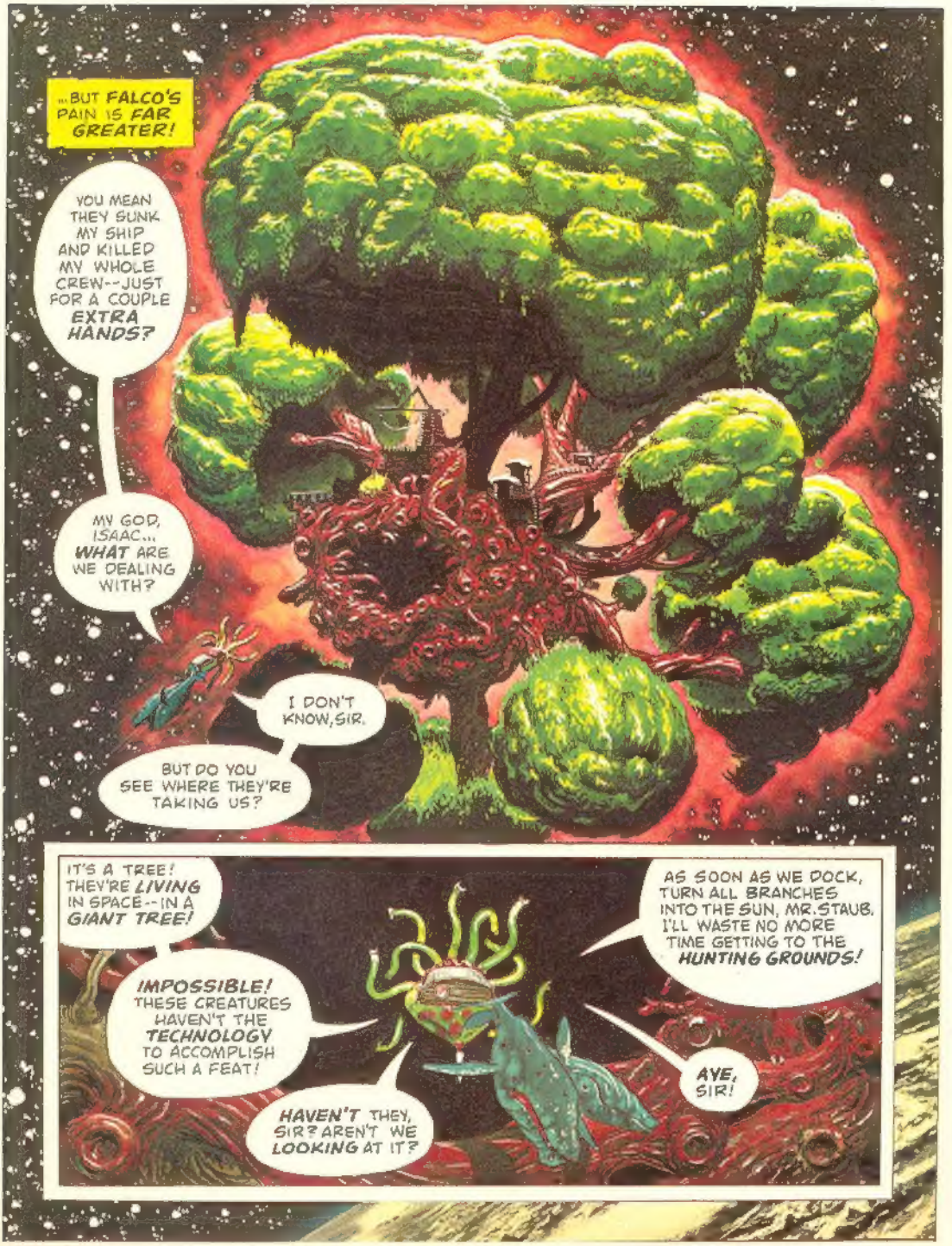
CHAPTER ONE
PRESS GANG
THE SAD FACT IS THAT FOR CENTURIES MAN AND WHALE HAVE ONLY MET AT EITHER END OF A HARPOON, BUT TODAY, EVEN AS THE SLAUGHTER CONTINUES, SOME MEN HAVE DROPPED THEIR SHAFTS AND BEGUN TO LISTEN...
COMPUTERS VERIFY THESE AS THE SAME POLYRHYTHMIC PATTERNS WE RECORDED ON THE '78 EXPEDITION!
COMMANDER FALCO--YOU MUST HEAR THIS--IT'S FANTASTIC!
ISAAC, I'VE GOT BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN LISTEN TO A BUNCH OF FISH WITH INDIGESTION!
GROOOOON
GROOOONNN
KREET
KREET
KLIK
KLIK
FOUR FATHOMS UNDER THE SARGASSO SEA. WITHIN THE NUCLEAR ATTACK SUBMARINE BARB, ONE SUCH MAN IS LISTENING--CETOLOGIST JOHN ISAAC, WHO HAS DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO BETTER UNDERSTANDING THE HAUNTING CRIES THAT ECHO BENEATH THE WAVES...
SIR, THOSE WHALES ARE A LOT MORE THAN DUMB ANIMALS. OUR COMPUTERS HAVE IDENTIFIED COMPLEX LEVELS OF LANGUAGE STRUCTURE IN THEIR SONGS.
THEY SOUND ALMOST--UNEARTHLY!
I USED TO KNOW A LITTLE LADY IN SINGAPORE WHO WOULD MAKE NOISES LIKE THAT!
NO, SIR, THIS ISN'T THEIR MATING SEASON!
AND I DOUBT IF THE NAVY TAKES THIS AS LIGHTLY AS YOU DO, SIR, OR THEY SURELY WOULDN'T HAVE PROVIDED ME WITH THE SERVICES OF YOUR SUB FOR MY RESEARCH!

BAROOOMMMMM
KLANG
DON'T KID YOURSELF, SON. THEY HAVE TO DO SOMETHING WITH US WHILE WE'RE WAITING AROUND DOWN HERE FOR THE NEXT WAR!
WAIT A SECOND... THAT'S NO WHALE!
WITHOUT A WARNING, THE BARB LURCHES TO ONE SIDE--
JESUS H. CHRIST.
SOUND GENERAL QUARTERS!
IT'S GOT TO BE A LIFE FORM, SIR, OR SHE'D HAVE REGISTERED ON OUR SCOPES!
ONE OF YOUR DAMN WHALES I'LL WAGER, ISAAC.
GET ONE OF THE REMOTE CAMERAS ON IT AND LET'S HAVE A LOOK!
THE VIDEO SCREENS FLICKER TO LIFE AND REVEAL NOT A WHALE, BUT A SQUIRMING VISION FROM THE BOWELS OF HELL ITSELF!
MY GOD.
W-WHAT IS IT?

ALL AHEAD FULL! GIVE HER EVERYTHING SHE'S GOT!
YESSIR!
DAMAGE CONTROL-- REPORT!
EXTENSIVE LEAKAGE IN ALL COMPARTMENTS-- REPORTS OF LARGE SPINES BREACHING THE HULL. WE'RE TAKING ON A LOT OF WATER, SIR!
IF THAT WATER REACHES THE REACTOR CORE--
BUT THERE IS NO TIME TO THINK THE UNTHINKABLE...
SEAWATER FINDS THE MAIN CIRCUITS AND THE POWER FAILS TO THE SOUND OF THE BULKHEAD BUCKLING UNDER TERRIBLE STRESS...
KREEEK SNAP!
RACKED BY EXPLOSIONS FROM WITHIN AND BEING TORN STEM TO STERN FROM WITHOUT, THE BARB'S SUPER STRUCTURE FINALLY CRACKS AND SHE GIVES UP HER CREW TO THE COLD JAWS OF DOOM.

ENGULFED AND GUTTED, SHE MAKES HER FINAL DIVE...
NO CHANCE TO REACH THE SURFACE-- THIS IS IT!
...AND I'LL NEVER KNOW WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE... OR WHY!
JOHN ISAAC IS WRONG!
S-SOMETHING FROM INSIDE THAT THING IS PULLING ME IN!
GOT TO GET A HOLD OF FALCO-- MAYBE SAVE HIM, TOO!
AIR! I CAN BREATH IN THIS STUFF!
I'VE HEARD OF EXPERIMENTS USING MEMBRANE AS EFFECTIVE MOISTURE BARRIERS, BUT NEVER AT THESE PRESSURES!
CAPTAIN ROTWANG! I'VE GAFFED A PAIR OF THE DOUBLE-BRAINERS!

GOOD WORK, MR. STAUB! 'TWAS NOT SO HARD A TASK, THEN TO FILL OUT OUR CREW...
LOOK HOW THIS ONE GAGS AT THE SIGHT OF MY DISMEMBERMENT!
THE GREAT RED THAT GOES BY THE NAME ABRAXAS WAS WHO DISMASTED ME, EARTHMAN! AND 'TWAS THE XLEXU SURGEONS WHO FASHIONED ME THIS LOVELY PEG TO HOP ABOUT ON!
BUT THEN, YE'LL BE MEETING BOTH SOON ENOUGH!
PUT YER BACKS INTO IT, ME BUCKOS! LET US LEAVE THIS IMPOVERISHED LITTLE PLANET WITH ITS TINY WHALES!
ISAAC HAS NOT UNDERSTOOD A WORD THAT HAS BEEN SPOKEN TO HIM...
...BUT THE FULL IMPACT OF THE SITUATION IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY CLEAR!
UNNNH... WHAT'S GOING ON?
COMMANDER, I THINK WE'RE BEING SHANGHAIED!
IS SHE BOILING YET, MR. STAUB?
AYE, CAPTAIN ROTWANG!
REVERSE GRAVITY!
SECURE MEMBRANES FOR DEEP SPACE!
ISAAC HAS AN OVERPOWERING FEELING THAT HE IS LEAVING HIS HOME PLANET--PERHAPS FOREVER--AND THAT FEELING SINKS IN HIS GUTS DEEPER THAN THE BARB HAS SUNK INTO THE BRINY HEART OF THE OCEAN!


...BUT FALCO'S PAIN IS FAR GREATER!
YOU MEAN THEY SUNK MY SHIP AND KILLED MY WHOLE CREW--JUST FOR A COUPLE EXTRA HANDS?
MY GOD, ISAAC... WHAT ARE WE DEALING WITH?
I DON'T KNOW, SIR.
BUT DO YOU SEE WHERE THEY'RE TAKING US?
IT'S A TREE! THEY'RE LIVING IN SPACE--IN A GIANT TREE!
IMPOSSIBLE! THESE CREATURES HAVEN'T THE TECHNOLOGY TO ACCOMPLISH SUCH A FEAT!
HAVEN'T THEY, SIR? AREN'T WE LOOKING AT IT?
AYE, SIR!
AS SOON AS WE DOCK, TURN ALL BRANCHES INTO THE SUN, MR. STAUB. I'LL WASTE NO MORE TIME GETTING TO THE HUNTING GROUNDS!

I WANT A FLENSING CREW ON THOSE WHALES, AND NO DELAY! THEY MAY BE PYGMIES COMPARED TO OUR USUAL FARE BUT THEY'LL GIVE US ENOW MEAT AND OIL TO SEE US THROUGH TO THE WHALE PLANET!
TELL THE XLEXU SURGEONS TO MEET ME ON THE QUARTER-DECK!
AYE, SIR!
HERE'S TWO MORE VICTIMS FOR YE, XLEXU. THE YOUNG ONE SHOULD MAKE A GOOD LOOKOUT! PREPARE THE OTHER FOR FURNACE DUTY!
CHIT.
CHIT.
I DON'T THINK I LIKE THIS.
GREAT CLAWS SWEEP THE MEN OFF THE DECK AND UGLY FANGS PUSH VENOM INTO THEIR VEINS--
ARRRG!
OWW!
THE EFFECT IS TOTAL DELIRIUM! REALITY BECOMES A SWIMMING MIASMA OF VERTIGO AND MADNESS!
YET, EVEN IN HIS FRENZY, ISAAC FEELS THE VACUUM OF A GREAT PEACEFUL EVE FLOATING IN THE VERY CENTER OF HIS HOWLING BRAIN STORMS...
INEXORABLY, HE IS DRAWN TO IT...
AND IN A MOMENT OF HALLUCINOGENIC BALANCE HIS MIND MELDS WITH THAT OF A XLEXU SURGEON!

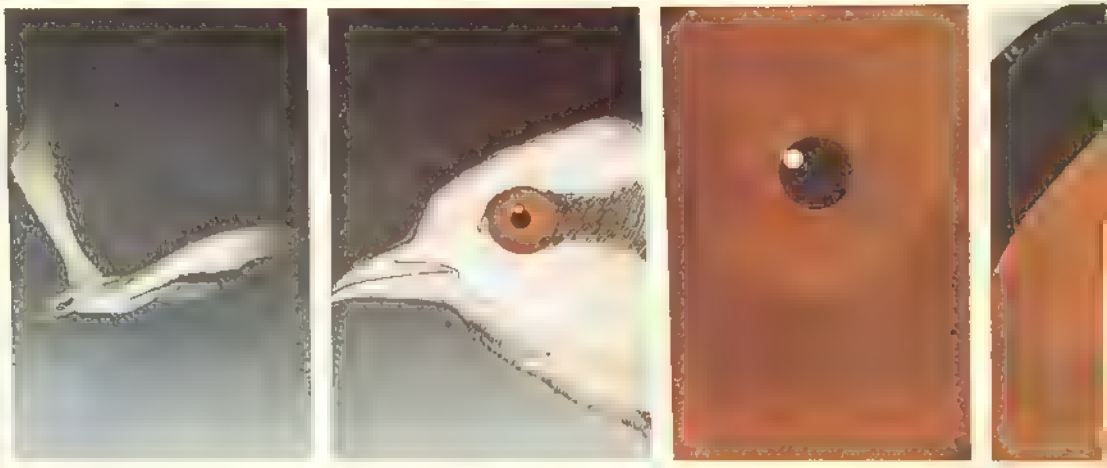
ISAAC AWAKENS TO THE DISORIENTING SENSATION OF INHABITING TWO BODIES AT ONCE--
--HIS OWN PARALYZED FLESH AND THAT OF THE KLEXJ!
HIS ESSENSE DRIFTS BETWEEN OSCILLATING WAVES OF HUMAN REASONING AND INSECTILE THOUGHT PROCESSES..
IT IS HIS OWN CRUSTACEOUS CLAWS THAT REACH DOWN AND MAKE THE FIRST INCISIONS..
WHILE FROM HIS ANESTHETIZED BODY HE WATCHES IN HELPLESS FASCINATION AS HIS HUMANITY IS PEELED AWAY!

AND SOMEWHERE BACK ON EARTH THE WHALES ARE SINGING!

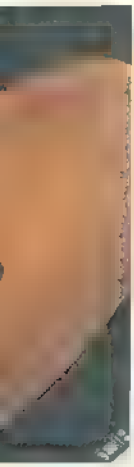
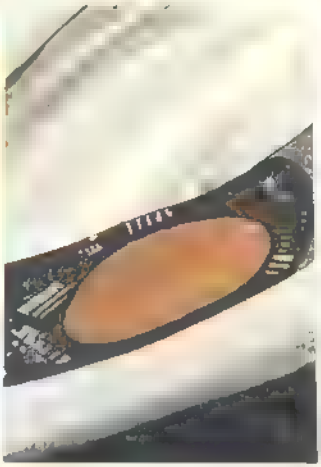
...not until a man from Earth
journeys to the Whale Planet
and meets Abraxas,
will we be delivered
from the Zones of the Sea.

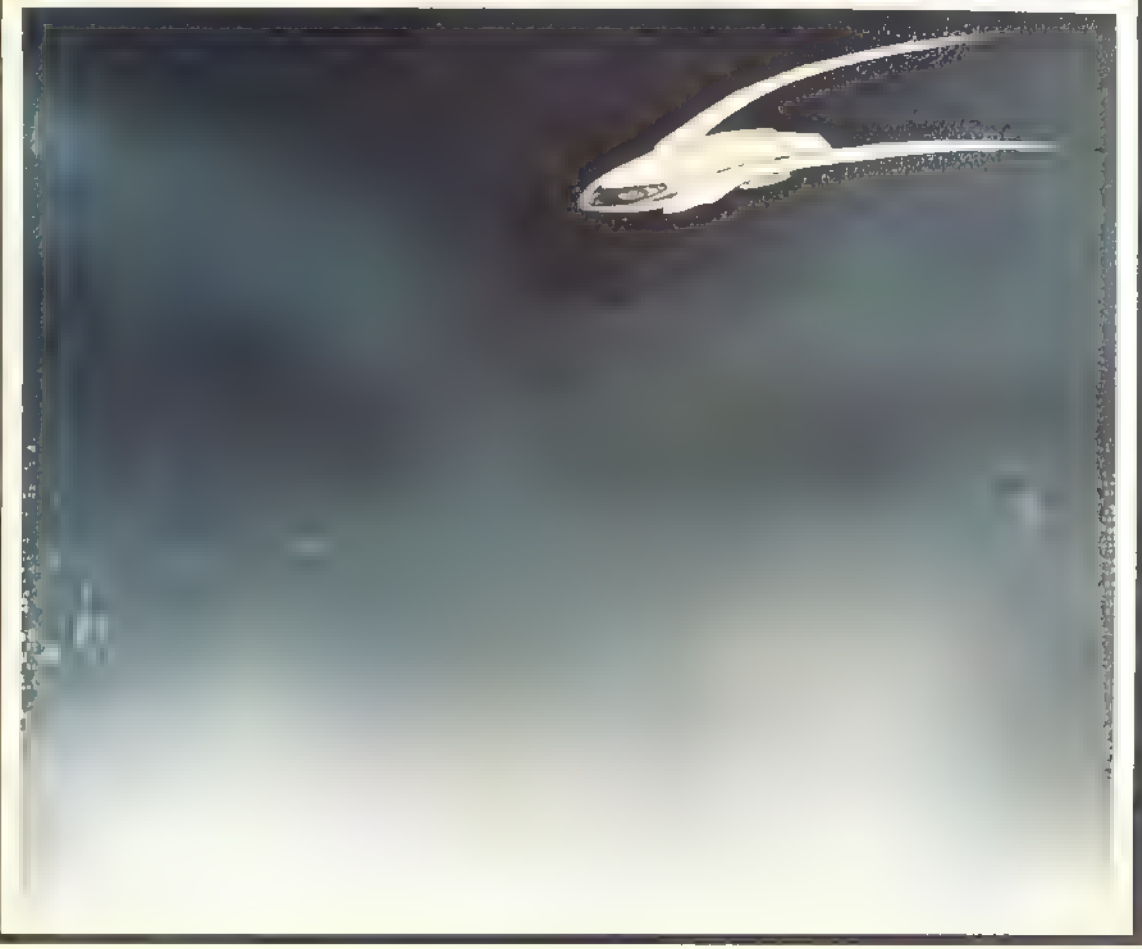
JD Veitch ©

ABRAXAS AND THE EARTHMAN continues next issue



BIRD



PROLOGUE
They never did find all of her after the bomb went off. But they found enough...
McFadden restructured her exactly from a fragment of her breast. Well, not quite exactly. He made a certain unbudgeted alteration in the interests of establishing diplomatic relations. Politically and genetically speaking it was a tradeoff. She wanted to end the war, he gave her that chance.
All she had to do was die Again..

LIAISON

War with the Krem had over the years become big business. Mega-buck military/industrial conglomerates rose and fell depending on the fortunes of war.

It was without doubt the most profitable war ever fought. And the most absurd. Neither side could afford to win. Which meant neither side could afford for the other to lose, [illegible] what it was.

Peace was downright bad for business because the only viable alternative, free trade, was impossible with the Krem.

There was something about them. A gland or enzyme or a chemical in the sweat or something they ate but they were intolerable. Deathly so. Prolonged exposure to the Krem inevitably produced irritability followed by insanity followed by death.

So while there had been several attempts to reach some sort of equitable peace, most notably the Cordor Conference, they invariably ended in frustration, death, and a resumption of conflict.

And once the Conglomerates, led by Icon Enterprises, began turning a profit, peace became a liability. Costs were minimal — a few billion lives per annum — and profits from a galaxy-wide wartime economy were simply staggering.

At the end of each fiscal year corporate heads would wag, vowing to do something about "The Krem Menace," but they never did anything.

Business was business and, like the war, business was booming.

So was Taggart. Unfortunately about five minutes too soon. The homemade laser bomb was still in her pocket when it went off.

Her father had headed the Cordor delegation. Had died on some forgotten mudball halfway across the universe. They hadn't even gone back to get his body. And they certainly hadn't listened to him.

But they would listen to her, these captains of industry, sitting in plush climate-controlled offices, hidden from the war and the death by columns of figures on reams of computer print-outs that gauged the war coldly in terms of dollars spent and dollars earned.

She would bring a little piece of the war to their doorsteps and force them to hear her out.

story 1981 Roger McKenzie art 1981 Jeff Easley

Icon was determined to nip them in the bud. And Taggart's was just the bud they needed. So Icon rebuilt her, cell by cell, until she was exactly as she had been.
Except for a small synthetic gland no bigger than a thimble nestled behind her liver. That was McFadden's idea.
And if... *if*... it worked as he hoped, the Mongers, the world, and even the Krem just might have the means to bring peace to a war-torn galaxy.
If it didn't, Taggart would die
For the *third* time...
He was responsible for her second death. That was the only part of the plan he didn't like. Since her rebirth she had come to be the daughter he'd never known.

He liked to watch her with the animals. She had a way with them. And since her second life was of necessity an isolated one in the sterile confines of Icon's lab they became her only real friends. Periodically while she slept McFadden entered the lab and removed the most affected ones. Without exception they grew [illegible] and finally died.
The gland was working [illegible] for her to know that. Not yet. Everything depended on her ignorance [illegible] and most importantly, from
Sergeant Lucas agreed wholeheartedly. He was McFadden's direct link with the Mongers and other than McFadden was the only one who knew about the gland. And it was Sergeant Lucas who made the final arrangements with the Krem. Everything was, he told McFadden with a smile, going according to schedule...
[illegible] three weeks, and McFadden [illegible] her. He told the Tribunal of the long conversations they'd shared, via monitors, about the Mongers [illegible] trusted him completely. Taggart hated him.
[illegible] longer needed she was found guilty of sedition and murder — her own, — and sentenced to die. A stiff sentence considering the death penalty was a thing of the past, but by the end of the proceedings the judicial board had grown quite irritable and [illegible] out of sorts.
She was, McFadden thought ruefully, the ultimate hostile witness .

He was in the crowd, among crowds of newspaper photographers and Icon officials gathered a month later to watch her execution.

Nearly time, he thought, as she was led handcuffed to a small airtight chamber, unused for the last three hundred years.

He caught her [illegible] and [illegible].

Then she was ushered past him into the execution room and strapped to a hard-backed wooden chair. Nobody said a prayer for her reconciliation with God, or if they did she never heard.

The only thing she heard was the gentle [illegible] as the cyanide capsule, where it finally struck the [illegible].

[illegible] rather in the gleaming sickbay of a small [illegible] McFadden was still smiling.

[illegible] she screamed, remembering the nightmare. The [illegible] that reached for her like strands of a spider's web. And falling, as if down an endless well. But no matter how far or for how long she fell, they were crawling closer and closer —

McFadden helped her up.

[illegible] like the spider. Or the Krew...

[illegible] anything. About the gland that would, he had every reason to believe, enable her to deal with the Krew... her second failed death... and how she had been smuggled off-world away from [illegible] toward a second rendezvous at Cordor.

She was their liaison with the Krew. She must succeed where her father had failed.

If the gland worked.

And if Sergeant Lucas hadn't been standing there in the doorway, Icon plasma blaster in hand
It was a conscious effort that nearly killed her but she felt it pulse way down deep inside. The gland.
as his own screams
He saw Taggart dimly through a red haze, raised his blaster... cursed... and blew most of his head away. Anything to stop the agony
Taggart lost consciousness then and when she finally awoke, head pounding from the worst hangover imaginable, Sergeant Lucas had grown cold and stiff. And McFadden had slashed his own throat with a scalpel .

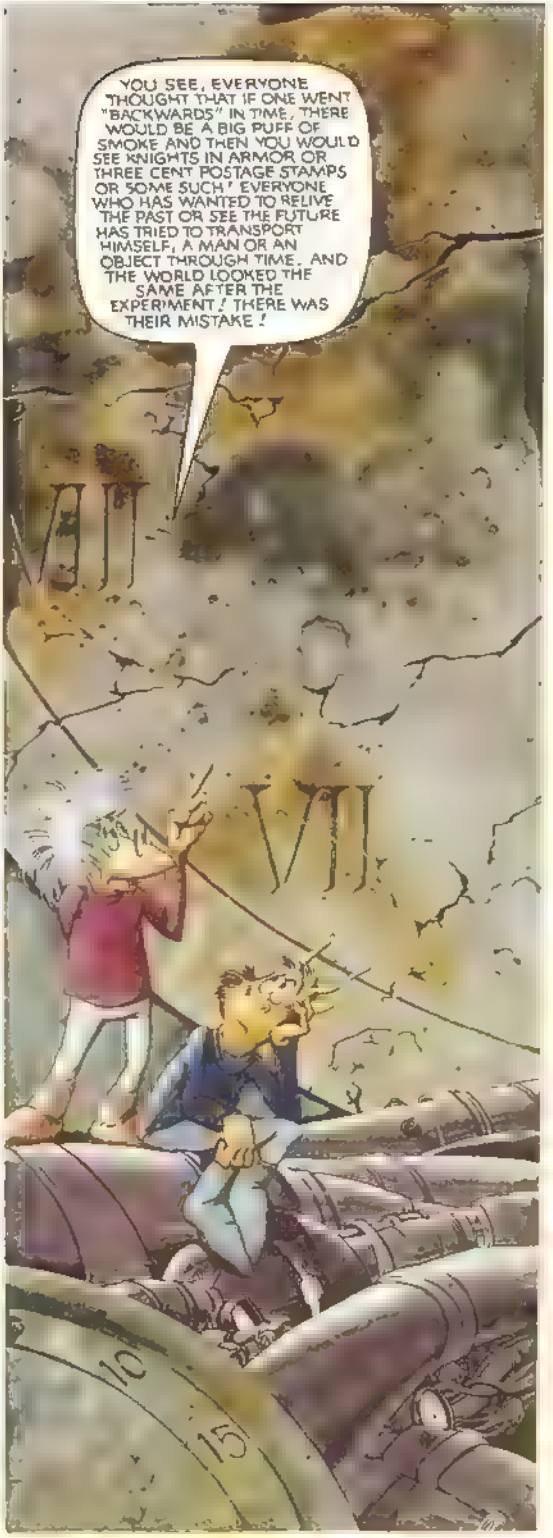
A week later she reached Cordor, found the conference site, buried McFadden
and what little remained of her father.
She left Sergeant Lucas to the swirling green sand and the scavengers. Just like Icon had left her father...
Taggart met the delegation halfway
"Mr. Ambassador," she said as she stepped forward to shake his hand, "I've been dying to meet you."

WELCOME! Ah YOU MUST BE THE LAD FROM THE UNIVERSITY, COME TO SEE ME! BUT OF COURSE COME IN, COME IN! I'M ON THE VERGE OF A VERY EXCITING BREAKTHROUGH, YOU SEE

© 1981 Ken Macklin

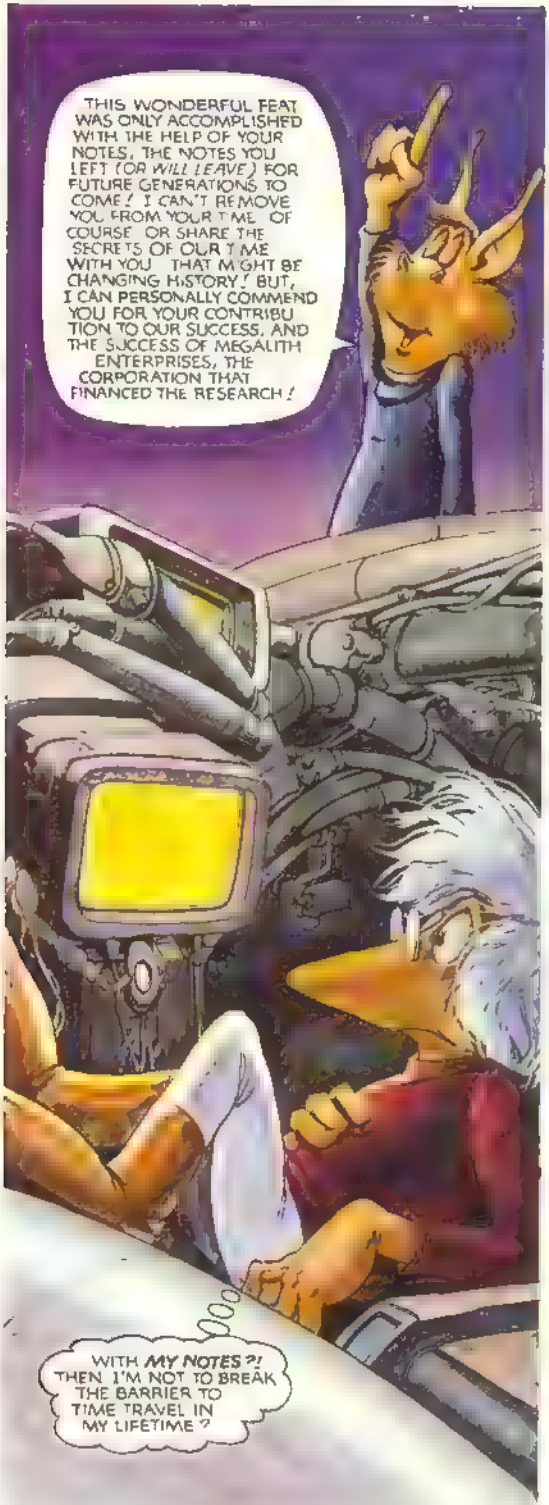
HERE, IN MY LAB, I'M CHALLENGING OUR PLACE IN TIME OR THE TIME OF THE REST OF THE COSMOS TO OURS, DON'T YOU SEE!
MANY HAVE PURSUED AN UNDERSTANDING OF THIS DIMENSION OF TIME TO THE PURPOSE OF TRANSPORTING THEMSELVES TO OTHER DAYS AS EASILY AS ONE WALKS TO OTHER PLACES
YES, DOCTOR, I KNOW
TIME TRAVEL THEY CALLED IT! PRETTY FAR-FETCHED STUFF IF YOU ASK ME!

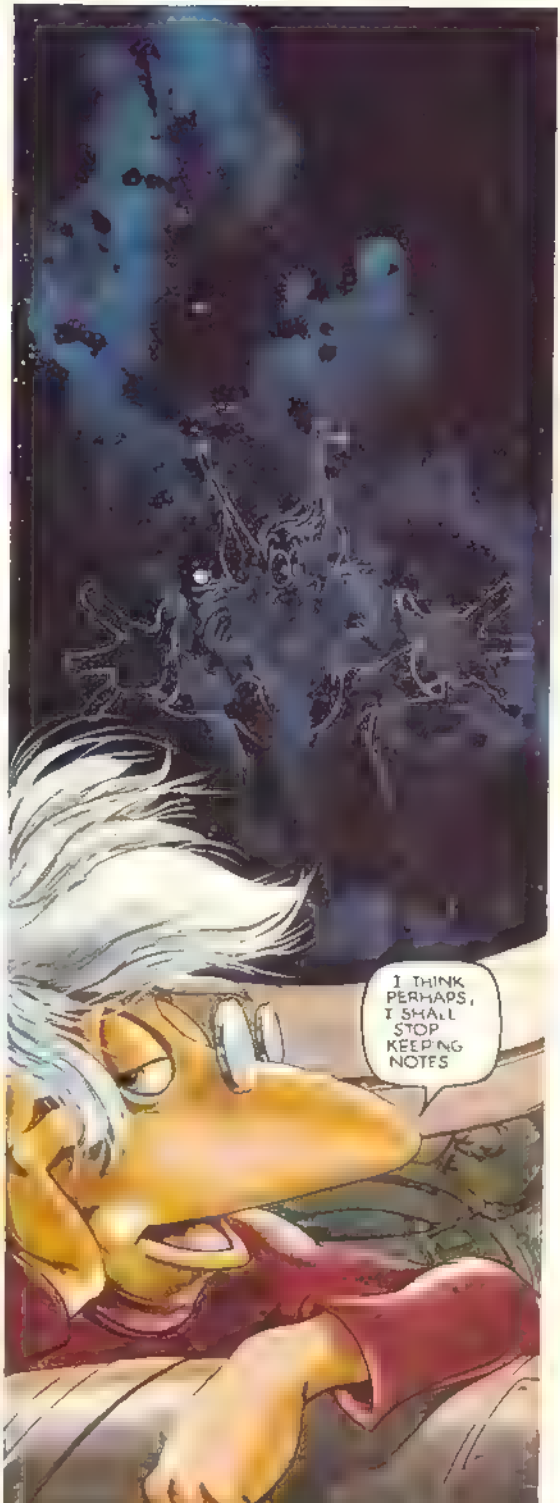
ANYWAY LACKING AN ABSOLUTE FRAME OF REFERENCE, ONE MIGHT WELL HAVE WONDERED HOW ONE COULD KNOW IF HE HAD SUCCEEDED IN MOVING THROUGH TIME AT ANY PARTICULAR TIME CONFUSING...YES?
YES, DOCTOR I
DON'T INTERRUPT ME WHILE I'M ELUCIDATING!


YOU SEE, EVERYONE THOUGHT THAT IF ONE WENT "BACKWARDS" IN TIME, THERE WOULD BE A BIG PUFF OF SMOKE AND THEN YOU WOULD SEE KNIGHTS IN ARMOR OR THREE CENT POSTAGE STAMPS OR SOME SUCH! EVERYONE WHO HAS WANTED TO RELIVE THE PAST OR SEE THE FUTURE HAS TRIED TO TRANSPORT HIMSELF, A MAN OR AN OBJECT THROUGH TIME. AND THE WORLD LOOKED THE SAME AFTER THE EXPERIMENT! THERE WAS THEIR MISTAKE!

YOU SEE, I'M NOT SEEKING TO CHANGE MY POST ON IN TIME I'M TRYING TO CHANGE THE REST OF THE WORLD!

YES, YES, I KNOW, PROFESSOR! YOU SEE, I'M NOT FROM THE UNIVERSITY--NOT THE ONE YOU KNOW! I'M FROM THE FUTURE. WHERE FOUR HUNDRED YEARS FROM NOW (YOUR TIME), OUR RESEARCH TEAM HAS TRANSVERTED TIME AT LAST! I'VE COME HERE TO THE PAST TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION!
WHAT?!


THIS WONDERFUL FEAT WAS ONLY ACCOMPLISHED WITH THE HELP OF YOUR NOTES, THE NOTES YOU LEFT (OR WILL LEAVE) FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS TO COME! I CAN'T REMOVE YOU FROM YOUR TIME, OF COURSE, OR SHARE THE SECRETS OF OUR TIME WITH YOU, THAT MIGHT BE CHANGING HISTORY! BUT, I CAN PERSONALLY COMMEND YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO OUR SUCCESS, AND THE SUCCESS OF MEGALITH ENTERPRISES, THE CORPORATION THAT FINANCED THE RESEARCH!
WITH MY NOTES?! THEN I'M NOT TO BREAK THE BARRIER TO TIME TRAVEL IN MY LIFETIME?


I THINK PERHAPS, I SHALL STOP KEEPING NOTES

SYNOPSIS:

Seven years ago the **People of the Stars** were wiped out by Nizenthor, mightiest of the evil **Demon Lords**. Since then the only survivors of the slaughter, Bronwen and her twin brother Bran, have lived in Northern Forest under the protection of the benevolent witch Dame Melinor.

When the twins attempted to contact the **Old Ones**, ancient beings of tremendous power and goodness, they were instead attacked by Lord Nizenthor and his minions, and Bran was gravely wounded. Now Bronwen has been transported to the shore beside the **Sea of Souls** to find and destroy the pebble that is Lord Nizenthor's soul.

Children-of-the-Stars

©81 CVESS

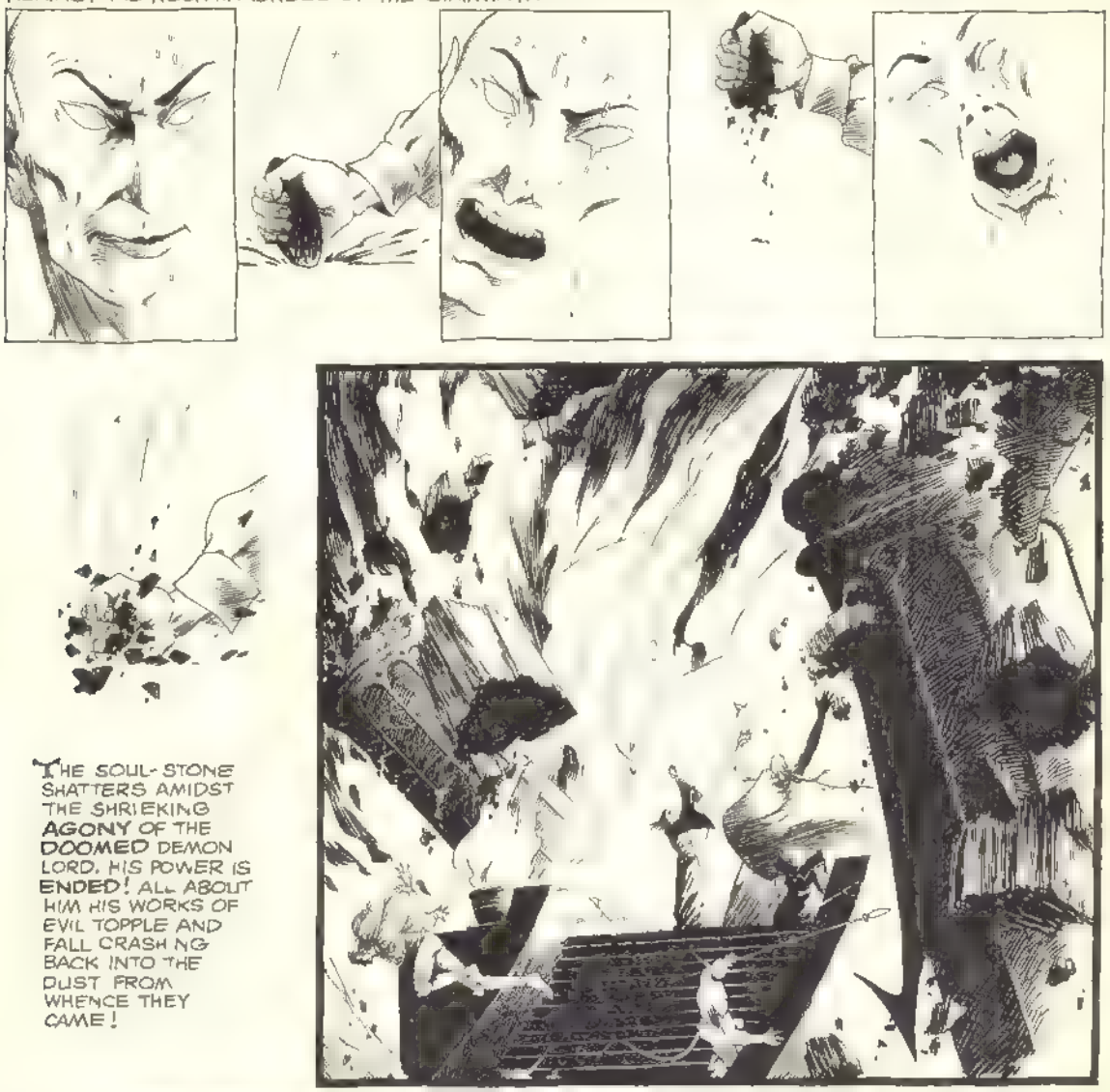
1981 Charles Vess

WHO ARE YOU?
EH. CHILD, HAVE YOU COME TO HELP ME? I GROW OLD, MY EYES CAN NO LONGER SEE THE TINY PEBBLES AS THEY ONCE DID.
NO, OLD WOMAN! THE OLD ONES SENT ME HERE TO.
THE OLD ONES... YES, THEY BROUGHT ME HERE, TOO! BRIGHT WERE THEIR PROMISES; "YOUR HUSBAND HAS DIED IN OUR SERVICE, FIND HIS SOUL AND HE WILL BE RETURNED TO YOU."
YET NOW I AM OLD AND IF HE BE RETURNED HE WILL BE AS HE WAS, YOUNG AND STRONG! LOOK AT ME! WILL HE EVEN RECOGNIZE THIS FACE?! BUT I MUST FIND HIM. HELP ME! PLEASE!
NO! I CANNOT. THE OLD ONES GAVE ME A TASK ALSO. I MUST FIND THE SOUL-STONE OF LORD NIZENTHOR, PRINCE OF DEMONS.
AH THAT ONE BLACK AS ITS EVIL IS THAT STONE! IT FILLS THE AIR WITH ITS COLD BREATH YEARS AGO I PASSED IT, DOWN THE BEACH THAT WAY. YOU WILL NOT MISS IT!
NOW LEAVE ME! YOU WASTE MY TIME! I GROW OLDER WITH EACH BREATH I TAKE... GO!
I WISH YOU WELL, OLD WOMAN!

HOURS OF ENDLESS BEACH LATER..
A CHILL WIND RATTLES THE STONES. I MUST BE CLOSE!
IT IS AS SHE SAID, THE VERY AIR REEKS WITH ITS EVIL!
AT LAST!
HEAR ME, OLD ONES! IN MY HANDS I HOLD LORD NIZENTHOR'S LIFE. MY TASK FOR YOU IS DONE. YET GRANT ME A BOON...
I WOULD SEE HIS FACE WHEN I DESTROY HIM
THAT IS NOT TOO MUCH TO ASK!
ONCE AGAIN AS BRONWEN'S FEET TOUCH THE SURF THE BEACH BEGINS TO SHIFT BEFORE HER GAZE...

...AS SHE IS TRANS-PORTED TO THE REALM OF THE DEMON LORDS!
BLADES SHARPEN AND CROUCHED ROUND ABOUT THE CASTLE OF LORD NIZENTHOR
YOUR MASTER LORD NIZENTHOR. HE WOULD SPEAK WITH ME!
THE SILENT MINIONS OF THE DEMON LORD GATHER AROUND BRONWEN AND ER TO...

A HUGE GLOOM-LADEN CHAMBER WHERE THE LORDS OF DEMONKIND SIT IN COUNCIL
WELL, BROTHERS, IT SEEMS WE HAVE A VISITOR!
IN THE NAME OF THE DARK WE WELCOME YOU, BRONWEN
YOUR COMING HERE HAS SAVED US MUCH TIME AND ENERGY! IN THIS LAND ONLY YOU AND YOUR BROTHER HAD SUFFICIENT POWER TO CONTACT THE OLD ONES!
ONLY THROUGH THEIR INTERVENTION COULD THE DARK HAVE BEEN STOPPED AND THIS LAND SAVED! NOW THAT WILL NEVER BE!
NO! LORD OF DEMONS
IT IS YOUR DOOM THAT BRINGS ME HERE!


WITH ALL THE HATE IN HER BODY BRONWEN SMASHES THE SOUL-STONE OF LORD N'ZENTHOR AGAINST THE ROCK HARDNESS OF THE STAIRWAY..
THE SOUL-STONE SHATTERS AMIDST THE SHRIEKING AGONY OF THE DOOMED DEMON LORD. HIS POWER IS ENDED! ALL ABOUT HIM HIS WORKS OF EVIL TOPPLE AND FALL CRASHING BACK INTO THE DUST FROM WHENCE THEY CAME!
THEN SILENCE REIGNS OVER THIS SCENE OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION...

A DESTRUCTION THAT LEAVES ONLY TWO . VING CREATURES
ONE WHO STRUGGLES UP FROM THE DUST TO HEAR A HIGH-PITCHED, WAILING CRY
COMING FROM THE OTHER!
LORD NIZENTHOR, RULER OF DARK EMPIRES, WHO NOW SITS GIBBERING INSANELY AT THE SKY
IT IS YOU WHO KILLED KILLED MY PARENTS! YOU WHO HURT MY BROTHER YOU!
BUT NOW MY VICTORY SEEMS HOLLOW. . THIS REVENGE IS BITTER INDEED!
AND YET I MUST FINISH THIS THING
IT IS DONE!

IT IS A LONG WAY TO CAER DYVEDD! LONG ENOUGH TO HEAL THE PAIN OF RECENT DEATHS, OF OLD MEMORIES LONG ENOUGH FOR PEACE.
MEANWHILE WITHIN THE WALLS OF CAER DYVEDD..
SHE IS HERE.
WE WELCOME YOU HOME
BRAN MY BROTHER, HOW IS HE? IS HE WELL?
HE'S RECOVERED. GO TO HIM HE IS IN THE BEDROOM.
INSIDE, THEIR REUNION IS A JOYFUL ONE.

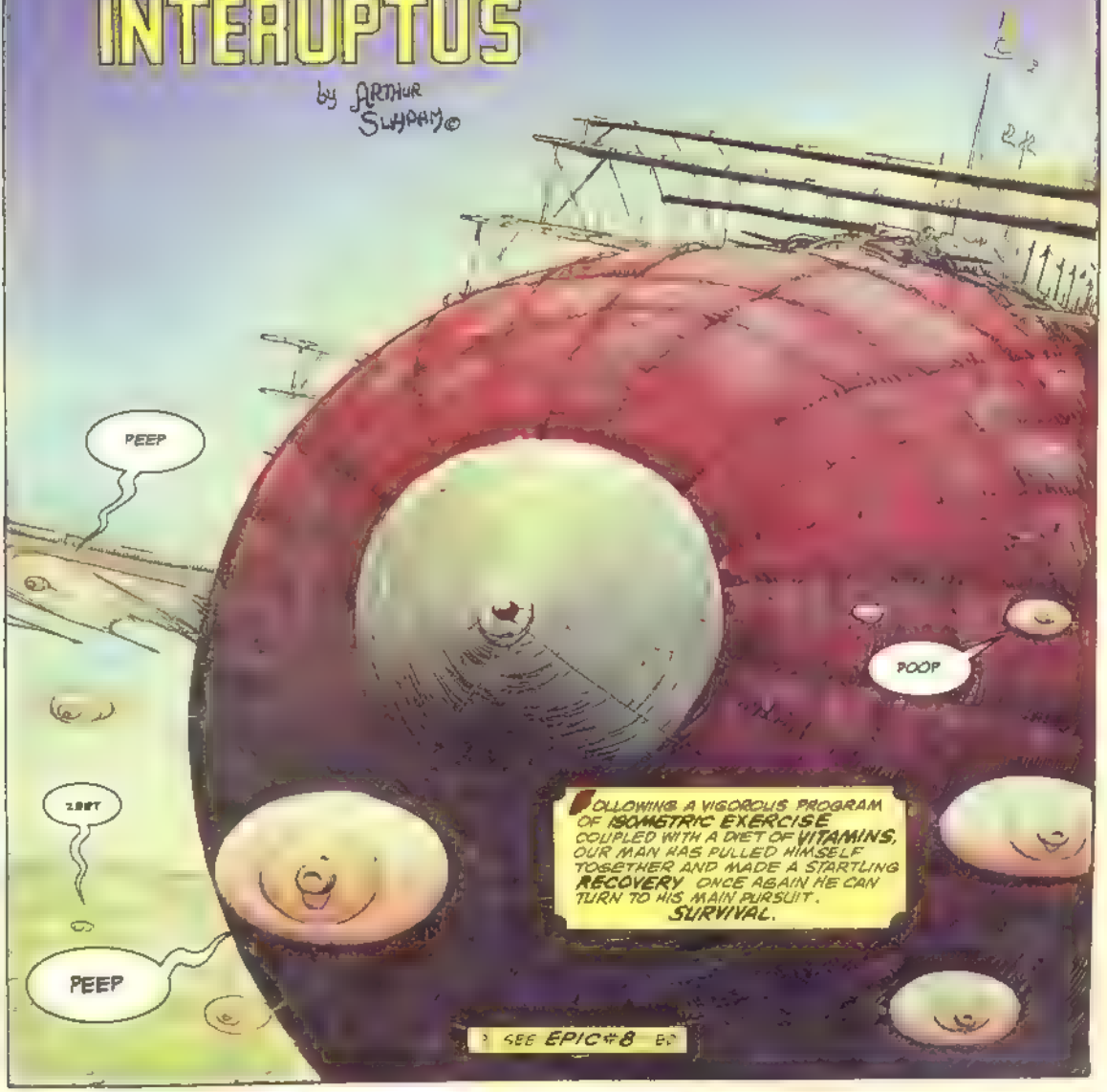
AND FROM ON HIGH THE GODS, THE OLD ONES, LOOK DOWN UPON CAER DYVEDD AND SMILE!

·END·

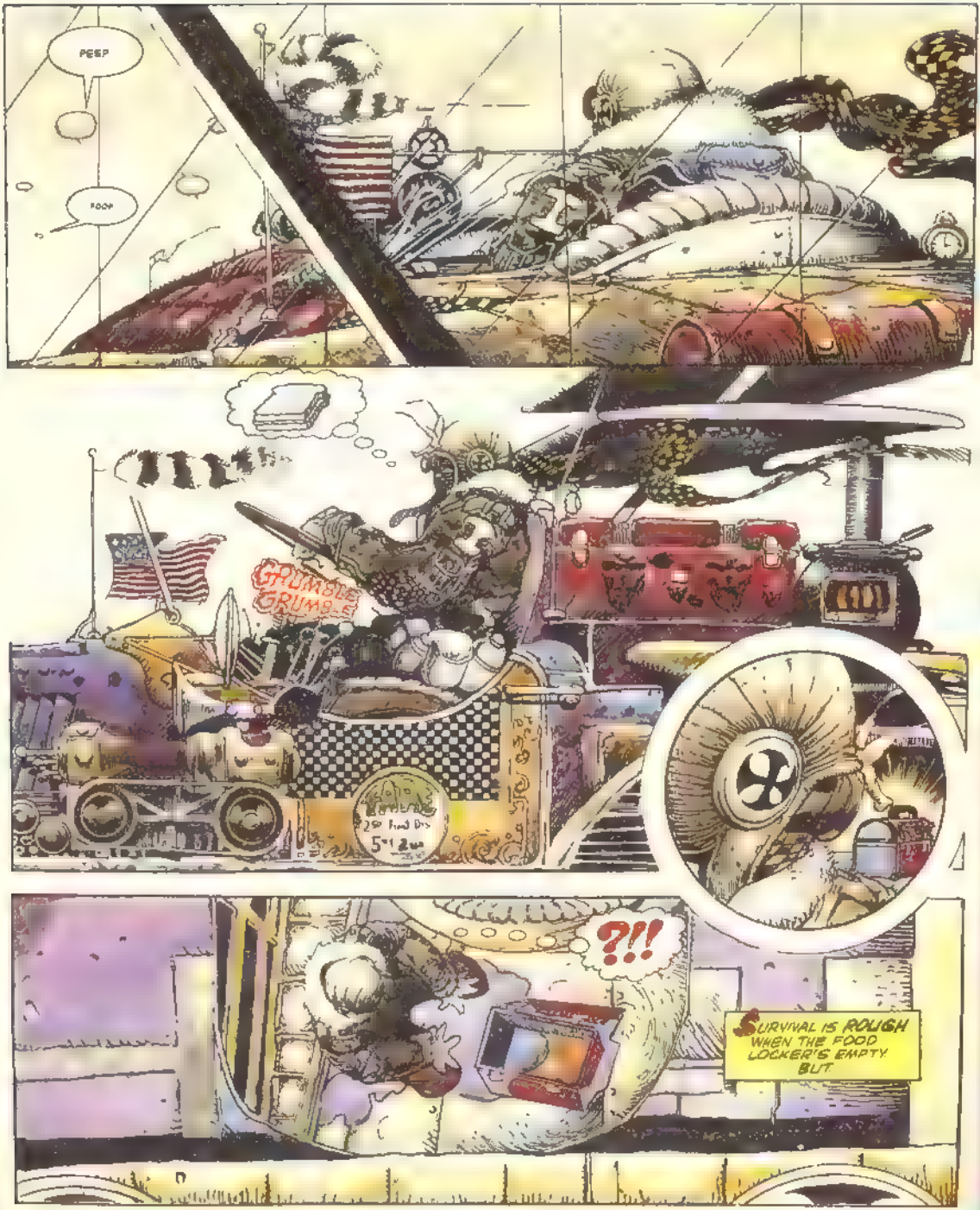
HE'S BACK. HE SHOULDN'T BE BUT HE IS. THE GAME OF A LITTLE LOVE, A LITTLE HATE* HAS HURT & KILL BUT NOT DESTROYED & MAN. HE'S STILL A SPACEWRECKED WANDERER ON A TIMELOST WORLD, ALIEN AND UNCHARTED.

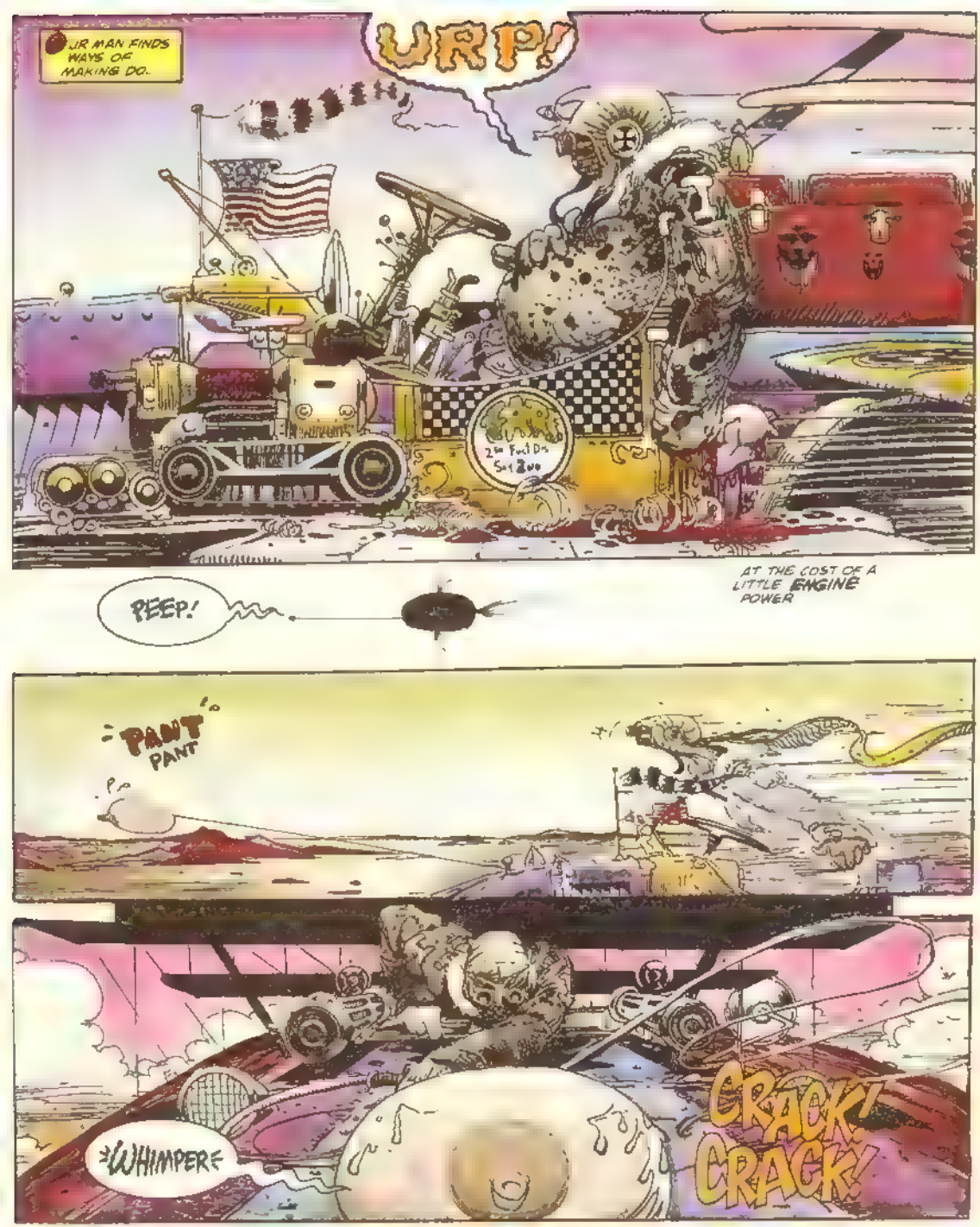
FLIGHTUS INTERUPTUS

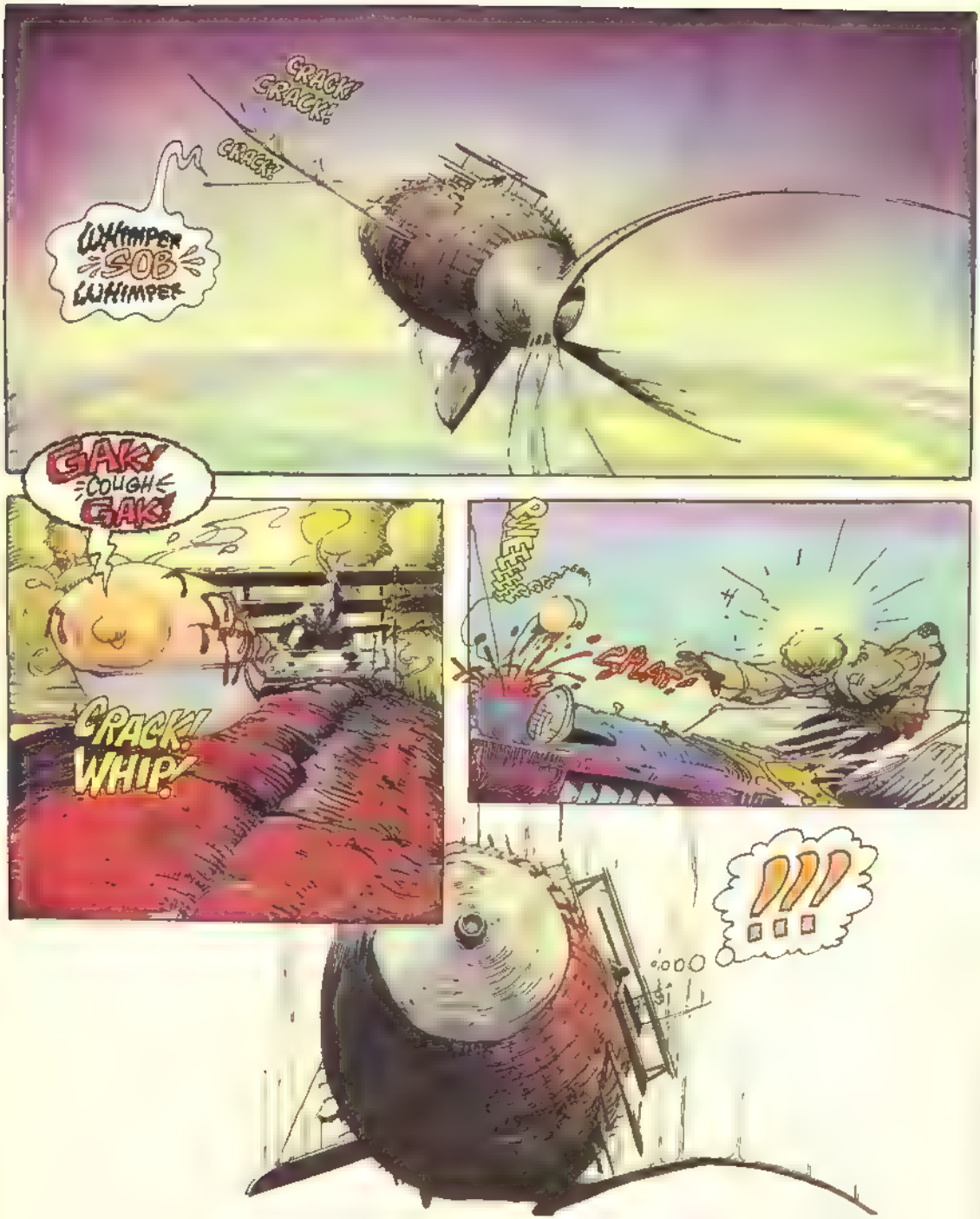
by ARTHUR SLUGHAM©


PEEP
POOP
ZEEP
PEEP
FOLLOWING A VIGOROUS PROGRAM OF ISOMETRIC EXERCISE COUPLED WITH A DIET OF VITAMINS, OUR MAN HAS PULLED HIMSELF TOGETHER AND MADE A STARTLING RECOVERY. ONCE AGAIN HE CAN TURN TO HIS MAIN PURSUIT. SURVIVAL.

* SEE EPIC #8 ED


PEEP
POOP
GRUMBLE GRUMBLE
?!!
SURVIVAL IS ROUGH WHEN THE FOOD LOCKER'S EMPTY BUT


UR MAN FINDS WAYS OF MAKING DO..
URP!
PEEP!
AT THE COST OF A LITTLE ENGINE POWER
PANT PANT
WHIMPER
CRACK! CRACK!


CRACK!
CRACK!
CRACK!
WHIMPER
SOB
WHIMPER
GAK!
COUGH
GAK!
CRACK!
WHIP!
SPLAT!
!!!

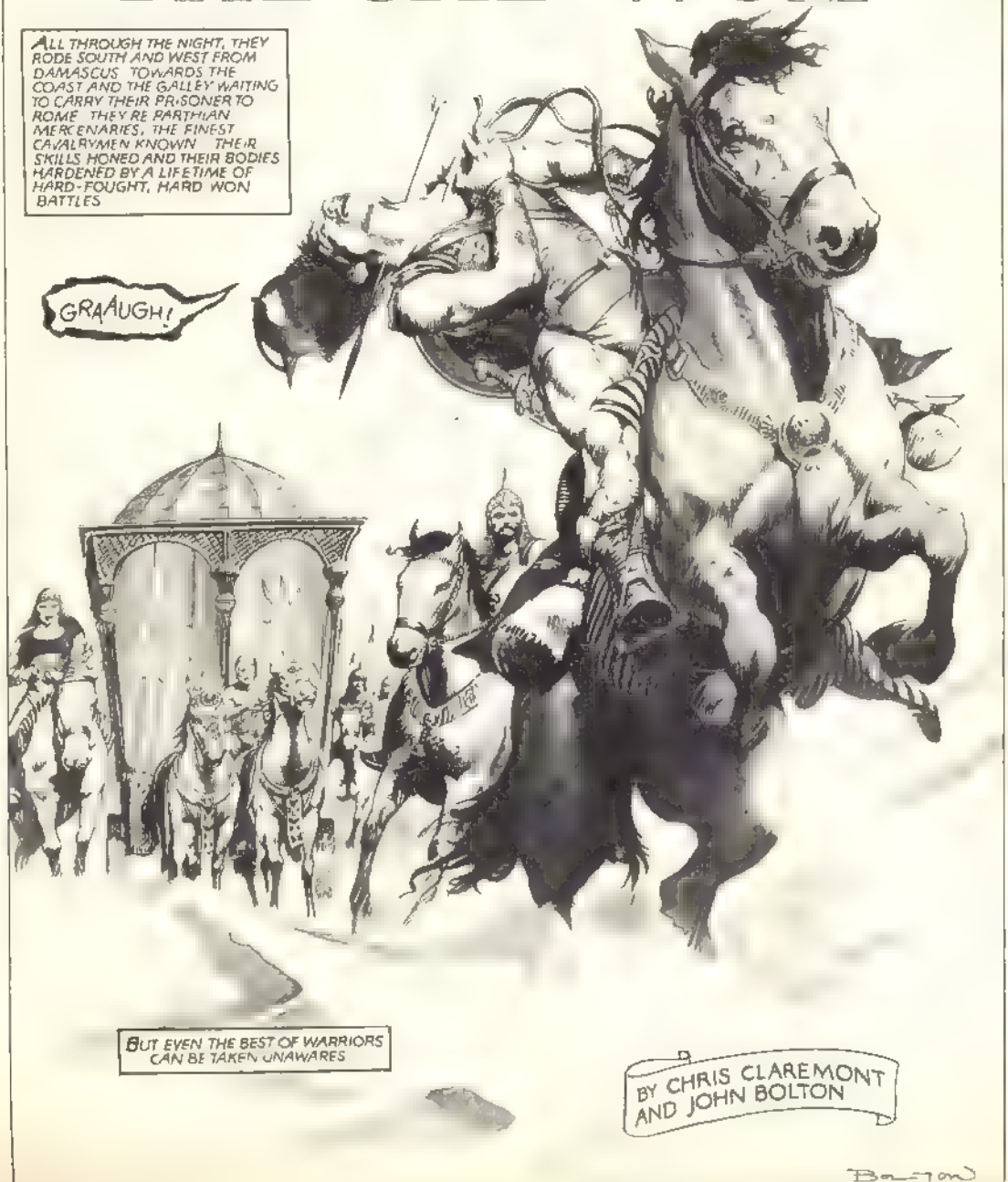
AIEEE

AK NG THE NECESSARY REPA RS.
OUR MAN ONCE AGA N RESU MES
H S JOURNEY
Until he finds
XOOG*FRICK-N-FRACK-N-PIP-PIP**TOZ
A SYMPATHETIC EAR

?!
!!
ZIP!
ZOOP
ZING!
ZIP
KA-TEE-DI-DEE-DIDEE-DUM—
CHOMP
ZAP!
ZOOP!
ZIP!
ZIP!

KA-TI-DI....
BLA-WHAM!
ZZZ

MARADA
THE SHE-WOLF

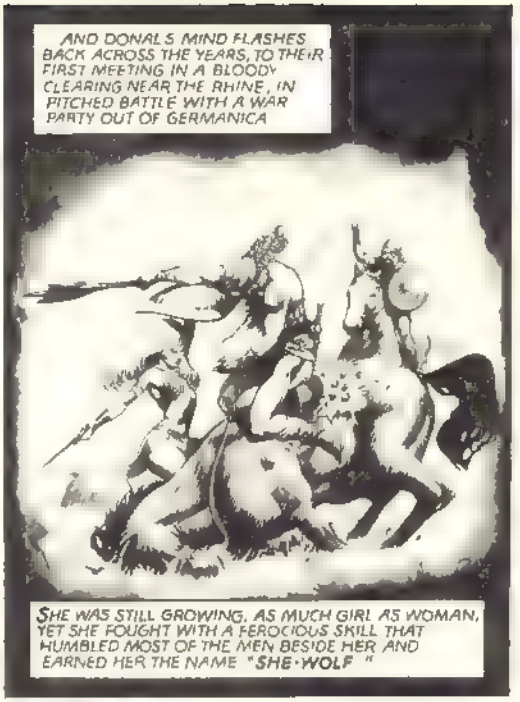

ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT, THEY RODE SOUTH AND WEST FROM DAMASCUS TOWARDS THE COAST AND THE GALLEY WAITING TO CARRY THEIR PRISONER TO ROME THEY'RE PARTHIAN MERCENARIES, THE FINEST CAVALRYMEN KNOWN THEIR SKILLS HONED AND THEIR BODIES HARDENED BY A LIFETIME OF HARD-FOUGHT, HARD WON BATTLES
GRAAUGH!
BUT EVEN THE BEST OF WARRIORS CAN BE TAKEN UNAWARES
BY CHRIS CLAREMONT AND JOHN BOLTON
Bolton

story © 1981 Christopher Claremont, art © 1981 John Bolton

AN INSTANT AGO, THE PARTHIANS WERE ALONE ON THE OPEN DESERT. NOW, IN THE PRE-DAWN HALF-LIGHT, THEY FIND THEMSELVES UNDER ATTACK FROM ALL SIDES. SHAKEN BY THE SUDDENNESS OF THE AMBUSH, THEY REACT SLOWLY. SLUGGISHLY.
EVEN AS THEY DESPERATELY WHEEL THEIR MOUNTS ABOUT TO MEET THE THREAT, THE RAIDERS ARE UPON THEM, LED BY A RED-BEARDED GIANT OF A MAN
AT THEM, MY BRAVOS!
IF THEY RUN, LET 'EM GO! IF THEY FIGHT, CUT 'EM DOWN!
THE PARTHIANS- AS RENOWNED FOR THEIR COURAGE AS THEIR ABILITY CHOOSE TO FIGHT
AND TO A MAN, DIE
THOSE PARTHIANS WERE FINE SOLDIERS. THEY DIED AS WARRIORS SHOULD-- IN FAIR BATTLE, WITH STEEL IN THEIR HANDS
WHOA, BRIGHTWIND!
THE DRIVER OF THAT PALANQUIN--HE MUST HAVE ORDERS TO KILL HIS PASSENGER IF THE CARAVAN WAS SEIZED
HOLD, FELLOW! STAND YOUR GROUND AND DROP YOUR BLADE, AND NO HARM WILL COME TO YOU!
HE CRIES THE COMMAND FIRST IN LATIN, THEN IN PARTHIAN. THE DRIVER IGNORES HIM

DAMN THE MAN! IS HE BOUND AND DETERMINED TO ENTER THE GATES OF DEATH S STRONGHOLD?!
IN THE NAME OF MY DREAD MASTER, BITCH PREPARE TO--
Gods !!
YOU WERE WARNED, FOOL
HMP! THE DRIVER IS NO PARTHIAN HE S EGYPTIAN-- AND HIS MYSTIC ALRA MARKS HIM AS SOME K ND OF PRIEST, AND A SORCERER!
THIS CARAVAN WAS ORGANISED BY TRIBUNE GAIUS MARCELLUS FULVA. BUT I THINK THE ROMAN WOULD BE AS SURPRISED AS I AM TO LEARN THE DRIVER S TRUE IDENTITY. ANOTHER POWER IS INVOLVED HERE - ARCANE, MALEFIC--AND DEADLY DANGEROUS.
NO SOUND FROM INSIDE THE WOLFLING MUST BE DRUGGED OR HEAVILY CHAINED AND GAGGED
BE OF GOOD CHEER STARHAIR YOUR RESCUE IS AT HAND--
--COURTESY OF DONAL MacILANLLWYR.
GODDESS PRESERVE ME!

MARADA?!?
AT THE SOUND OF HIS VOICE, THE SILVER-HAIRED BEAUTY CRINGES


AND DONAL'S MIND FLASHES BACK ACROSS THE YEARS, TO THEIR FIRST MEETING IN A BLOODY CLEARING NEAR THE RHINE, IN PITCHED BATTLE WITH A WAR PARTY OUT OF GERMANICA
SHE WAS STILL GROWING, AS MUCH GIRL AS WOMAN, YET SHE FOUGHT WITH A FEROCIOUS SKILL THAT HUMBLED MOST OF THE MEN BESIDE HER AND EARNED HER THE NAME "SHE-WOLF"

LATER, CELEBRATING THEIR VICTORY IN A FRONTIER POST GARRISONED BY A COHORT OF THE THUNDER CLAP LEGION, SHE MATCHED THOSE TOUGH LEGIONARIES DRINK FOR DRINK, SHARING THEIR BAWDY SONGS AND RIBALD STORIES
SHE GAMBLED WITH CARELESS ABANDON; YET INVARIABLY WON MORE THAN SHE LOST AND WHEN A TROOPER STEPPED OUT OF LINE AND TRIED TO TEMPT--THEN FORCE--HER TO HIS BED, SHE BROKE HIS JAW

SHE SWORE THAT NO MAN WOULD TAKE HER AGAINST HER WILL, AND THAT IF SHE EVER CHOSE A LOVER - OR MATE IT WOULD BE ON HER TERMS, NOT HIS. SHE HADN'T CHANGED A WEEK AGO, WHEN LAST I SAW HER. WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HER SINCE?!
IT'S TOO RISKY TO TRY TO LEARN THE ANSWER HERE I'D BEST GET HER HOME, AND QUICKLY!
UP YOU GO LASS!
SHE DOESN'T RESIST, SHE WON'T SPEAK IT'S LIKE HANDLING A PUPPET MADE OF FLESH!

IT WAS A FAIR SCRAP, DONAL WE SUFFERED MINIMAL CASUALTIES-- A FEW WOUNDED, NONE SERIOUSLY, NONE KILLED.
EXCELLENT, TADGH. FORM THE MEN. WE'LL BE AWAY WITH THE DAWN.
DONAL FACES EASTWARD AND, AS THE FIRST CREASE OF FIRE SEARS THE CREST OF THE HEIGHTS...
HE DRAWS A SACRED SIGIL IN THE AIR BEFORE HIM, AND CRIES ANCIENT WORDS OF POWER. THE STAR GROWS AS THE SUN RISES, ITS GOLDEN GLOW ENVELOPING DONAL AND HIS MEN, TRANSPORTING THEM FROM THE HIGHLANDS OF GALILEE..
TO THE GRIM, ROCKY COAST OF ENGLAND.
THIS IS ASHANDRIAR-- A STRONGHOLD, A PLACE OF LEARNING, OF MYSTERY, OF POWER.
IT IS A REMOTE PLACE, MADE MORE SO BY ITS REPUTATION. EVEN DRUIDS SHUN THIS PART OF THE ISLES. THIS KEEP THAT IS FAR OLDER THAN STONEHENGE FOR LEGEND SAYS THAT THOSE WHO RULE ASHANDRIAR ARE NOT HUMAN, BUT SIDHE-- THE IMMORTAL GODS AND GODDESSES OF FAERY.
LIKE ALL LEGENDS THESE HAVE SOME TRUTH TO THEM
DONAL MacLLYANLLWYR IS WARLORD OF THE KEEP, MASTER OF THE FORCE TEMPORAL BUT HE DOES NOT RULE HERE.

THAT RESPONSIBILITY IS THE PROVINCE OF HIS MOTHER, RHIANNON, MISTRESS OF THE ARTS ARCANE
TADGH ESCORT LADY MARADA TO HER APARTMENTS SEE THAT SHE WANTS FOR NOTHING I'LL JOIN YOU DIRECTLY.
WITHOUT A WORD
HER EYES DOWNCAST STEPS WEAK AND SUBMISSIVE, MARADA DOES AS SHE'S TOLD
IS THIS THE "SHE WOLF" YOU SPOKE OF, DONAL? THE WARRIOR YOU SEARCHED HALF THE WORLD TO FIND?
I FEAR IT WAS A WASTED EFFORT
PERHAPS SOMETHING'LL HAPPENED TO HER IN DAMASCUS, MOTHER I MEAN TO LEARN WHAT IT WAS
TAKE CARE, MY SON THERE IS A STENCH OF BLACKEST SORCERY ABOUT THE WOMAN.
GOOD MORROW, STARHAIR I TRUST THESE QUARTERS MEET WITH YOUR APPROVAL
AM I YOUR PRISONER, DONAL MacILYANLOWYR?
OHO! THE LADY FINDS HER TONGUE AT LAST!
NO MARADA-- NOT PRISONER. YOU ARE MY HONORED GUEST
YOU HAVE A MOST UNIQUE MANNER OF EXTENDING YOUR INVITATIONS
BETTER AND BETTER FIRST, SPEECH NOW, SOME SPIRIT THAT'S MORE LIKE THE SHE WOLF I REMEMBER
MEMORIES-- LIKE YOUR SHE WOLF ARE A THING OF THE PAST
IF I AM A GUEST, MAY I THEN LEAVE?
THE ONLY WAY OUT OF ASHANDRIAR IS THE WAY WE CAME IN VIA MY SPELL OF TRANSPORTATION
BUT I WILL CAST IT - I'LL SEND YOU ANYWHERE YOU WISH TO GO -

MARADA continues on page 76

PROLOGUE:
THE GREAT WAR.
NEARLY THIRTY NATIONS FURNISH FIGHTING MEN
NEARLY THIRTY MILLION BECOME CASUALTIES
DESTRUCTION MOVES INTO THE MODERN AGE
THERE ARE COUNTLESS CONSTANT NEW
INVENTIONS. TANKS MACHINE GUNS AERIAL
BOMBARDMENT MORTARS AND OF COURSE
POISON GAS
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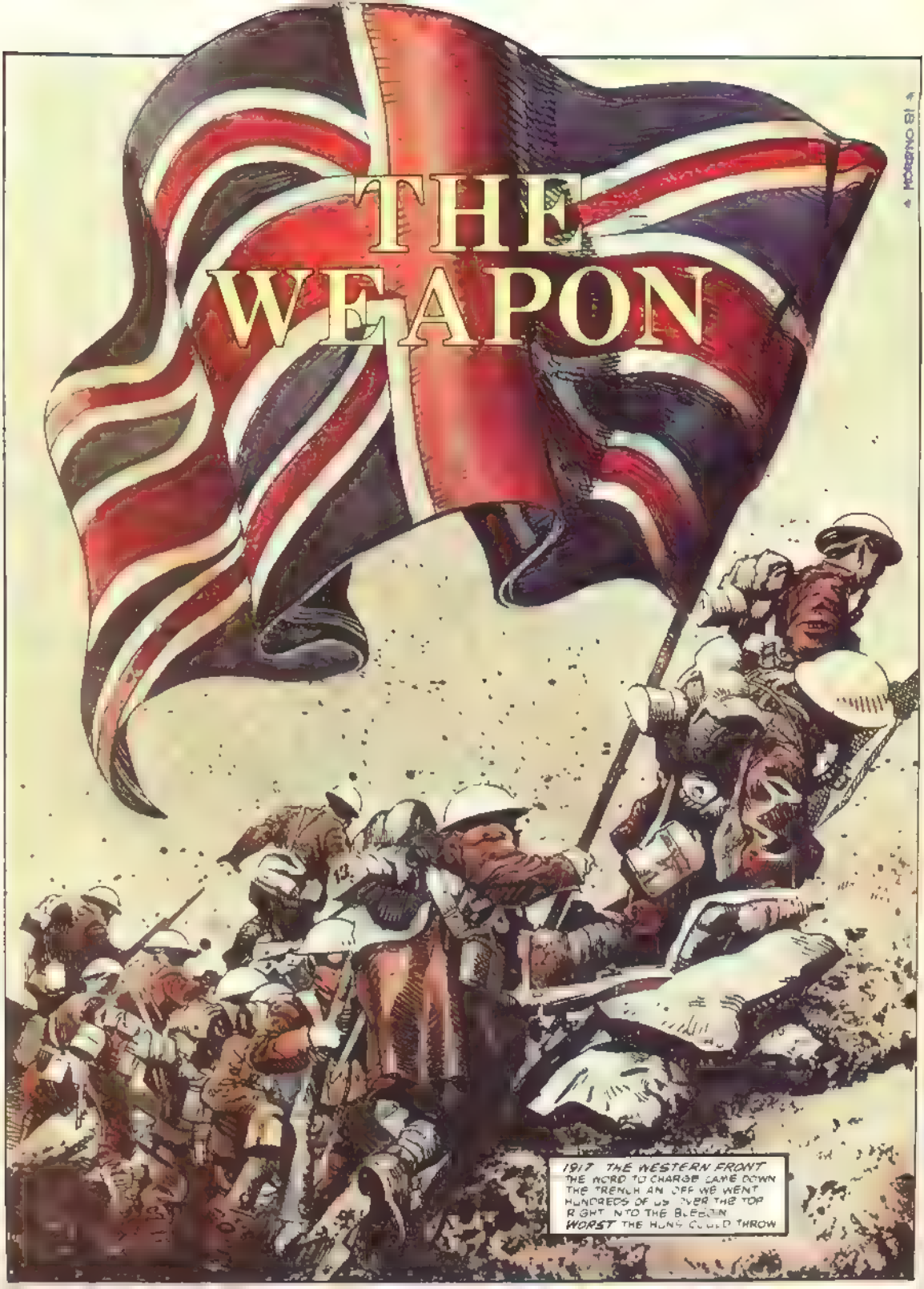
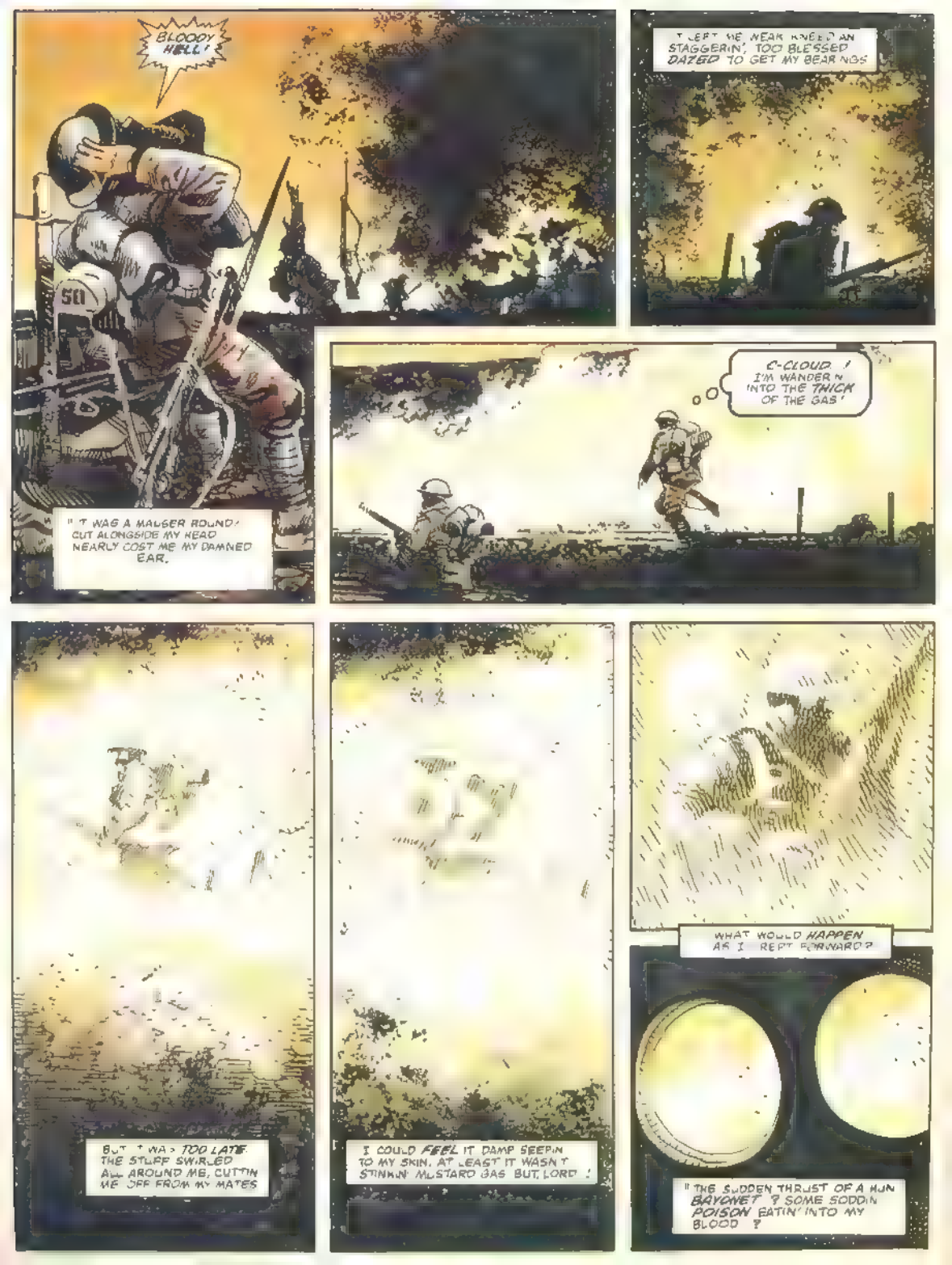
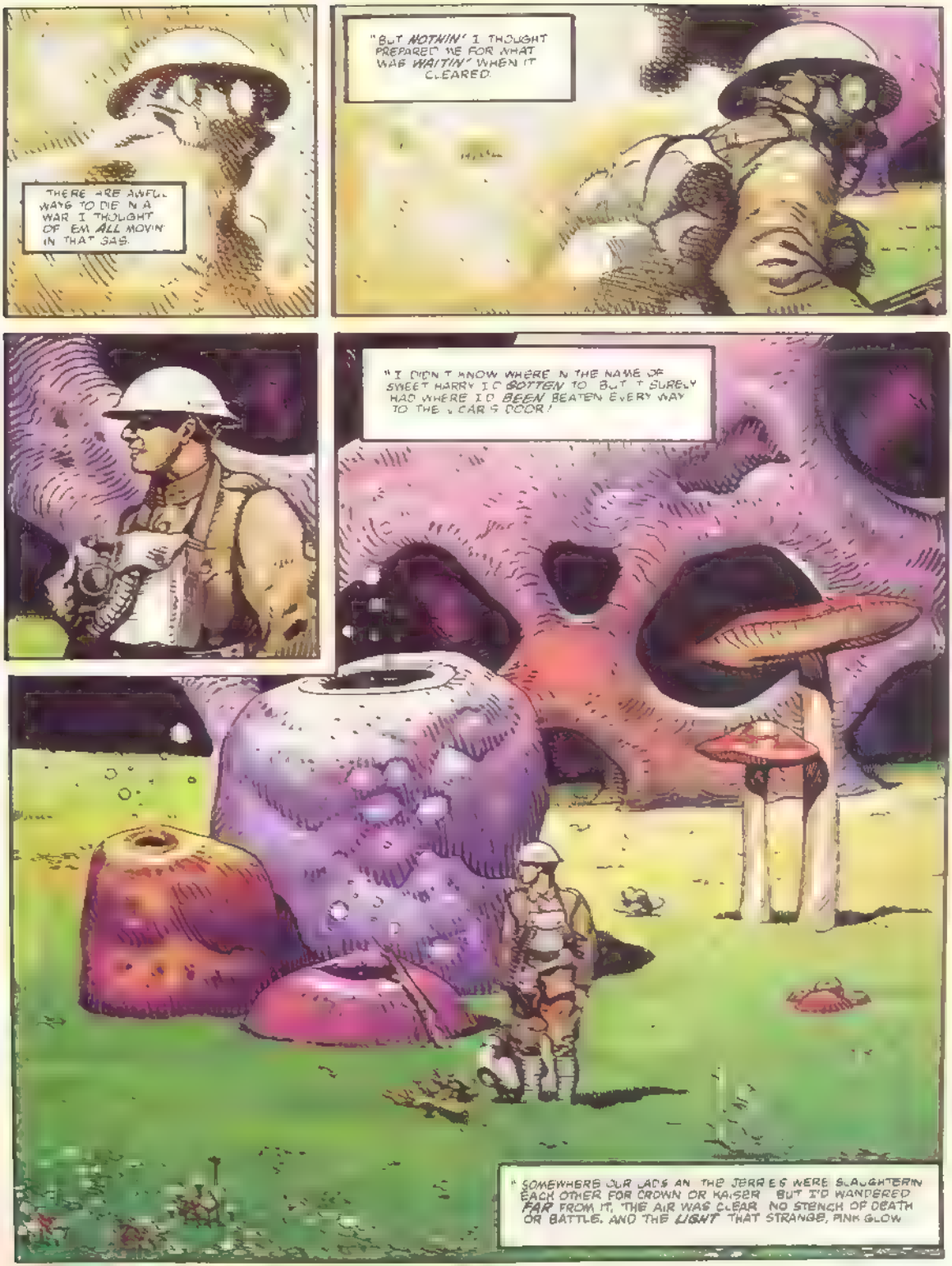

THE WEAPON
1917 THE WESTERN FRONT
THE WORD TO CHARGE CAME DOWN
THE TRENCH AN OFF WE WENT
HUNDREDS OF US OVER THE TOP
RIGHT INTO THE BLEEDIN
WORST THE HUNS COULD THROW

GAS! GREAT WHO CLOUDS !
BOOM
WE HAD OUR MASKS ON RIGHT ENOUGH BUT SMALL COMFORT THEY WERE IF IT WAS BLOODY MUSTARD GAS SEEPS RIGHT THROUGH CLOTH AND CANVAS BURNS YOUR SKIN 'TIL IT OOZES GET IN YOUR EYES YOU'RE BLIND FOR LIFE. AND THERE WERE RUMORS JERRY HAD NEWER STUFF MORE TERRIBLE YET
THE BRITSHERS ARE INTO NO MAN'S LAND INCREASE FIRE! SCHNELL!
" BUT WHATEVER THEY WERE THROWN WE WERE TOO SCARED TO STOP SO OUT THE GERMANS CAME
STORMIN FROM THEIR TRENCHES TO MEET US WITH BAYONETS FIXED AN MAUSERS BLAZIN


BLOODY HELL!
50
" IT WAS A MAUSER ROUND! CUT ALONGSIDE MY HEAD NEARLY COST ME MY DAMNED EAR.
I LEFT ME WEAK KNEED AN STAGGERIN', TOO BLESSED DAZED TO GET MY BEARINGS
C-CLOUD ! I'M WANDERIN INTO THE THICK OF THE GAS!
BUT IT WAS TOO LATE THE STUFF SWIRLED ALL AROUND ME, CUTTIN ME OFF FROM MY MATES
I COULD FEEL IT DAMP SEEPIN TO MY SKIN. AT LEAST IT WASN'T STINKIN' MUSTARD GAS BUT, LORD !
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN AS I CREPT FORWARD?
" THE SUDDEN THRUST OF A HUN BAYONET ? SOME SODDIN POISON EATIN' INTO MY BLOOD ?


THERE ARE AWFUL WAYS TO DIE IN A WAR I THOUGHT OF 'EM ALL MOVIN IN THAT 'BUS.
"BUT NOTHIN' I THOUGHT PREPARED ME FOR WHAT WAS WAITIN' WHEN IT CLEARED.
"I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE IN THE NAME OF SWEET HARRY I'D GOTTEN TO BUT I SURELY HAD WHERE I'D BEEN BEATEN EVERY WAY TO THE LAST CAR'S DOOR!
"SOMEWHERE OUR LADS AN THE JERRIES WERE SLAUGHTERIN EACH OTHER FOR CROWN OR KAISER BUT I'D WANDERED FAR FROM IT. THE AIR WAS CLEAR NO STENCH OF DEATH OR BATTLE. AND THE LIGHT THAT STRANGE, PINK GLOW

WAS WARMER THAN THE SUMMER SUN IN BRIGHTON
"I AIN'T A MAN TO LET HIS MATES DOWN BUT AFTER HELLISH COMBAT
HERE WAS PARADISE' AN SEE'N NO CLEAR WAY OUT SINCE THE GAS DISPERSED
WHY NOT PARTAKE OF WHATEVER T' OFFERED?
I WAS HAPPY AT PEACE FEELN'S THE WAR HAD ALMOST WIPED AWAY
THEN ABOUT TWELVE O'CLOCK I WAS I GOT REMINDED OF THE WAR SEEMS I WAS SHARIN' THIS PARADISE WITH ONE OF THE KAISER'S OWN
ONLY INSTEAD O' TARIN MY ENFIELD AN HAVIN A SHOT AT 'IM I WA TED

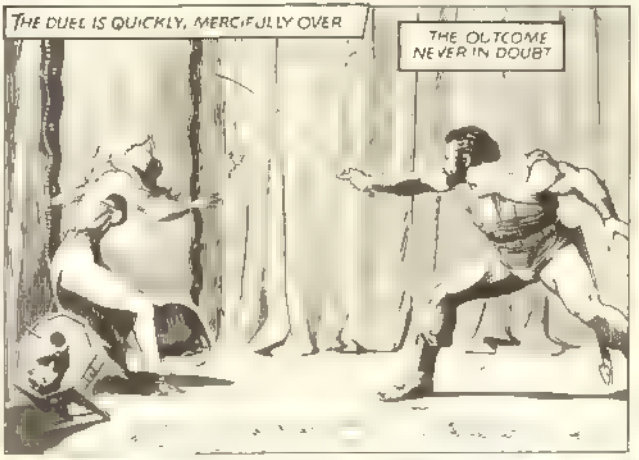
DELICIOUS! YOU HAVE A FINE TOUCH WITH A ROAST BIRD, ENGLANDER!
I WAS THOSE HERBS YOU GATHERED DID THE TRICK! CALL ME SID, EH?
"YOU'D HAVE THOUGHT WE'D HAVE TROUBLE UNDERSTANDIN' EACH OTHER. BUT WE JUST TALKED AN SOMEHOW I WORKED HIS NAME WAS GUNTER HOLTZ. HIS FAMILY WAS SHOPKEEPERS. SAME AS MINE. AN THE MORE WE TALKED THE MORE LIKE THAT WE FOUND LITTLE THINGS COMMON THINGS
COME MORNIN, SEEMED LIKE I WAS SAYIN' GOOD-BYE TO A MATE INSTEAD OF ONE OF THE BLOOMIN ENEMY
BEST BE FINDIN OUR LINES. 'FORE SOMB OFFICER-TYPE COMES LOOKIN TO SHOOT US AS DESERTERS
AUF WIEDERSEHEN SID
RIGHT YOU ARE GUNTER
THIS NEW DAY WAS HOTTER THAN THE LAST SO, BEFORE RUSHIN BACK TO BATTLE, I DECIDED TO ENJOY A BIT OF A SWIM

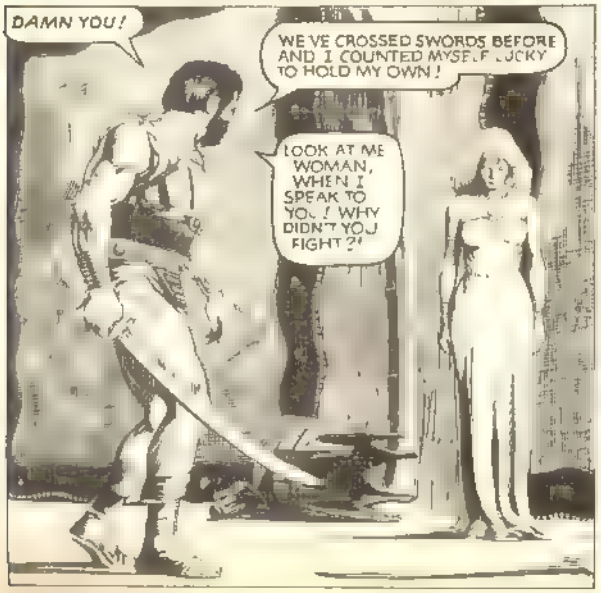
NO HARM IN A SHORT SNOOZE, EITHER NO HARM AT ALLLL
CONTENTED AN WARM MY SNOOZE TURNED NTO DEEP SLEEP NEXT TH NG I KNOW
T'S NIGHT MY HEAD WOUND'S THROBB N'. I'M BEIN' PICKED OUT OF WET COLD MUD
AND PARADISE IS FAR FAR BEH ND ME "
THAT'S SOLEMN TRUTH DOC BUT WILL ANYONE BELIEVE "?
THEY'LL BELIEVE THAT BULLET KNOCKED YOUR BRAIN, S.O. DON'T SPREAD SUCH RUBB SH
O ADVICE, MONEY
ANY SPECIALLY SINCE WE CAN'T FIND ANY EXPLANATION WHY HE'S THAT FINE SHADE OF PINK!
WE WERE FORTUNATE! ONLY ONE MAN INFECTED IT COULD HAVE BEEN MANY!
THEN IT'S SETTLED? THE FORMULA WILL BE DESTROYED THE DANGER OF THIS NEW WEAPON AFFECTING OUR OWN TROOPS IS FAR TOO GREAT!

--PROVIDED YOU FACE ME IN SINGLE COMBAT, AND DISARM ME.
≡OH!≡

THAT WAS A CASUAL TOSS - A NOVICE COULD HAVE CAUGHT THAT BLADE - YET MARADA DROPPED IT
HELL, SHE FLINCHED FROM IT AS IF THE SWORD WAS RED HOT!
MUST I DO THIS, LORD DONAL?

SHE'S TERRIFIED-- A WOMAN WHO WOULD AS SOON BRAWL AS BREATHE!
IF YOU WOULD LEAVE ASHANDRIAR, YES
COME FOR ME, STARHAIR!
ONCE MORE SHE DOES AS SHE'S TOLD

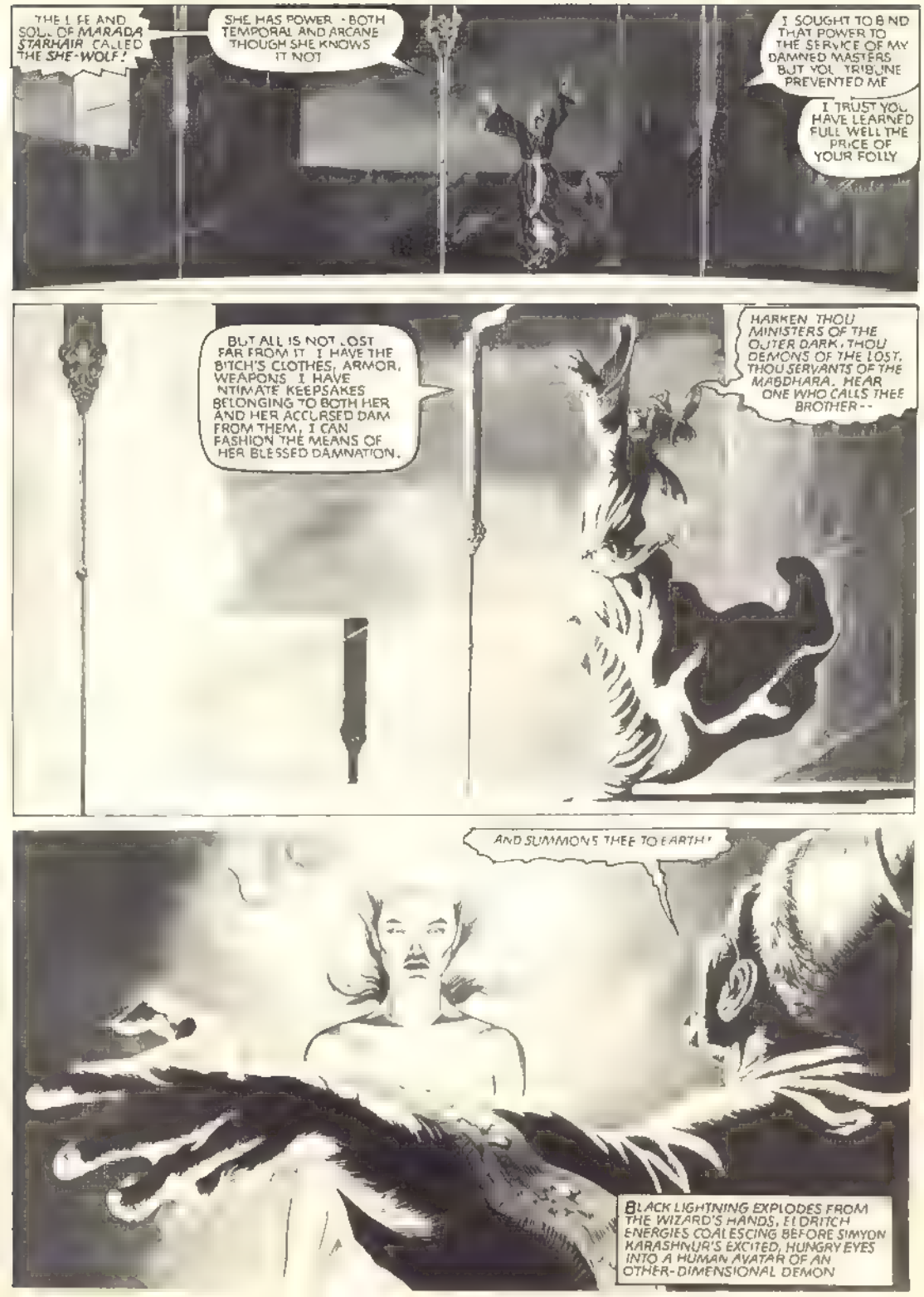

THE DUEL IS QUICKLY, MERCIFULLY OVER
THE OUTCOME NEVER IN DOUBT


DAMN YOU!
WE'VE CROSSED SWORDS BEFORE AND I COUNTED MYSELF LUCKY TO HOLD MY OWN!
LOOK AT ME WOMAN, WHEN I SPEAK TO YOU! WHY DIDN'T YOU FIGHT?!

IT IS NOT A WOMAN'S PLACE TO FIGHT LORD DONAL. ONLY TO SUBMIT
DO YOU TRULY BELIEVE THAT NONSENSE?!
I AM YOURS MILORD, TO DO WITH AS YOU WILL
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU IN DAMASCUS, STARHAIR? WHAT CHANGED YOU SO?!

I CAME FACE TO FACE WITH MY TRUE SELF
I KNEW YOUR FATHER. I WAS PRIVILEGED TO CALL HIM, FRIEND. WITH THOSE WORDS.
YOU SHAME HIS MEMORY
- AND YOUR MOTHER'S AS WELL!
SHE HAS NOT CRIED IN TWENTY YEARS..
SINCE SHE SAW HER FATHER DIE IN THE ARENA. BUT NOW, HER EYES BURN AND SALT TEARS STING HER CHEEKS AS SHE DOUBLES OVER, HER SOUL GRIPPED BY UNIMAGINABLE DESOLATION..
AND GRIEVES FOR HER SHATTERED SELF, FOR THINGS SUPREMELY PRECIOUS THAT SHE HAS LOST FOREVER
ACROSS THE CONTINENT, IN FABLED FARAWAY DAMASCUS, THE DESERT NIGHT IS DARK AND STRANGELY CHILL. THE MOON IS A BLACK SPOT ON THE STAR-SPECKLED SKY AND THE ENTIRE CITY SEEMS GRIPPED BY AN UNNATURAL STILLNESS
AND IF WHILE MAKING THEIR APPOINTED ROUNDS, THE CITY GUARDS HEAR AN OCCASIONAL SCREAM FROM A CERTAIN PALACE THAT FRONTS THE PLAZA OF THE SACRED WAY..
THEY PAY IT NO HEED
THE MAN WHO RESIDES WITHIN IS FEARED BY KING AND COMMONER BOTH - WITH GOOD REASON
WHAT A SHAME, GAIUS MARCELLUS. I SO EXPECTED YOU TO FACE TCHUNDA'S MINISTRATIONS WITH THE RENOWNED STOICISM OF WHICH YOU ROMANS SEEM SO PROUD. HE HAS BARELY BEGUN, YET YOU SHRIEK LIKE A BABE
YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS WIZARD! I AM AN OFFICER OF ROME!
NO, TRIBUNE, YOU ARE A THIEF-- WHO STOLE FROM ME SOMETHING OF INCOMPARABLE VALUE

I, RESCUED A DAUGHTER OF ROME FROM THE CLUTCHES OF A FIEND FROM HELL!
HIS TONGUE IS INSOLENT, MASTER. SHALL I REMOVE IT?
YOU MAY DO AS YOU SEE FIT, TCHUNDA. I HAVE NO FURTHER NEED OF THE TRIBUNE
AAAAAAGGG...
WHAT PRICE YOUR BRAVADO NOW, LITTLE MAN?
OR YOUR AMBITION?
HOW FOOLISH, HOW TYPICALLY ARROGANT OF YOU TO THINK YOU COULD CROSS SWORDS WITH ME AND EVEN SURVIVE MUCH LESS TRIUMPH
YOU HOPED TO WIN FAVOR IN CAESAR'S EYES BY RETURNING HIS WAYWARD GRANDDAUGHTER TO HIM. THAT MEANS NOTHING TO ME
I HAVE SEEN MORE EMPERORS MORE EMPIRES THAN YOU CAN POSSIBLY IMAGINE, TRIBUNE. YOUR ROME WILL LIVE ITS ALLOTTED SPAN AND THEN IT TOO WILL PASS AWAY -- LIKE EGYPT AND PERSIA AND BABYLON AND ASSYRIA BEFORE IT
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US, MY DEAR FULVIA, IS THAT YOU SERVE THE DREAMS AND DESIRES OF MAN
I, THE DREAMS AND DESIRES OF GODS
AND MY GODS DESIRE ONE THING


THE LIFE AND SOUL OF MARADA STARHAIR CALLED THE SHE-WOLF!
SHE HAS POWER - BOTH TEMPORAL AND ARCANE THOUGH SHE KNOWS IT NOT
I SOUGHT TO BIND THAT POWER TO THE SERVICE OF MY DAMNED MASTERS BUT YOU TRIBUNE PREVENTED ME
I TRUST YOU HAVE LEARNED FULL WELL THE PRICE OF YOUR FOLLY
BUT ALL IS NOT LOST FAR FROM IT I HAVE THE BITCH'S CLOTHES, ARMOR, WEAPONS I HAVE INTIMATE KEEPSAKES BELONGING TO BOTH HER AND HER ACCURSED DAM FROM THEM, I CAN FASHION THE MEANS OF HER BLESSED DAMNATION.
HARKEN THOU MINISTERS OF THE OUTER DARK, THOU DEMONS OF THE LOST, THOU SERVANTS OF THE MABDHARA. HEAR ONE WHO CALLS THEE BROTHER--
AND SUMMONS THEE TO EARTH!
BLACK LIGHTNING EXPLODES FROM THE WIZARD'S HANDS, ELDRITCH ENERGIES COALESCING BEFORE SIMYON KARASHNUR'S EXCITED, HUNGRY EYES INTO A HUMAN AVATAR OF AN OTHER-DIMENSIONAL DEMON

IS OUR SHAPE NOT PLEASING TO THEE, SIMYON?
IT IS PERFECT!
YOU ARE FORMED OF THE ESSENCE OF OUR DARK LORDS, YET YOU RETAIN WITH IN YOU A PIECE OF THE SOUL THE FUNDAMENTAL SELF OF THE SHE-WOLF YOU ARE BOUND TO HER AND SHE TO YOU NO POWER ON EARTH CAN HIDE HER FROM YOU
FIND MARADA REAVER THAT SHE MAY BE DELIVERED INTO THE HANDS OF THEY WHOM WE BOTH SERVE THE LORDS OF THE ABYSS!

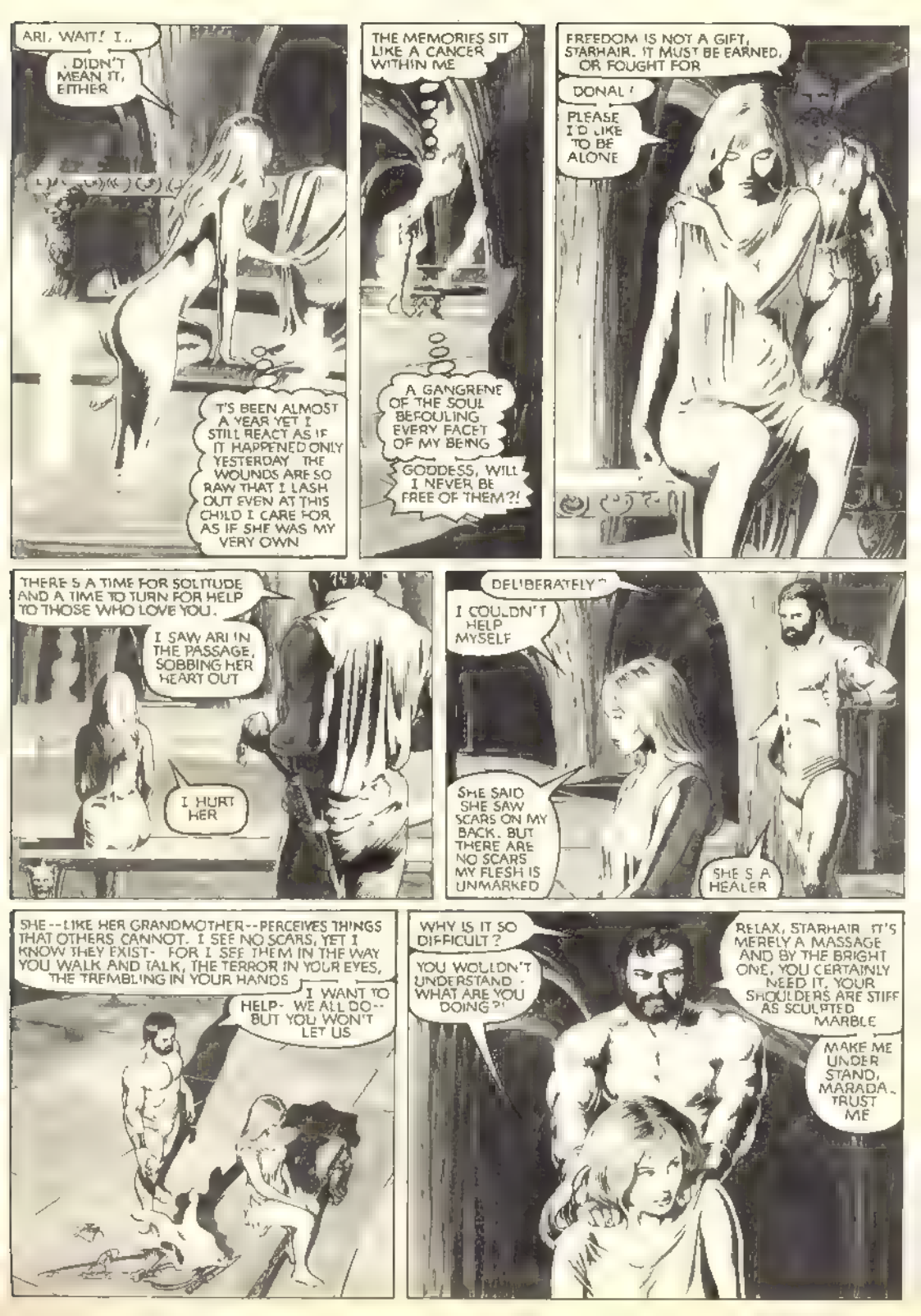
NNNNOOOOOOOO!
BEFORE THE ECHOES OF MARADA'S SCREAM HAVE DIED AWAY, DONAL, RHIANNON AND OFFICERS OF THE NIGHTWATCH ARE IN HER APARTMENT, WEAPONS DRAWN, READY FOR ACTION, AS THE SORCERESS-QUEEN CASTS A SPELL TO FLOOD THE ROOM WITH LIGHT
MARADA, WHAT HAPPENED? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
I I
BRIGHT GODDESS PROTECT ME IN MY MIND, MY DREAMS, IT WAS MONSTROUS! A THING SO STRONG SO HUNGRY SO EVIL!
IT-- WAS ME!
SEARCH THESE ROOMS THIS ENTIRE WING OF THE KEEP REPORT ANYTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY
THERE, THERE, CHILD WHATEVER THREATENED YOU IS GONE YOU ARE QUITE SAFE
BY MY LADY-HER BACK!
SOMETHING MOTHER?
I DO NOT KNOW TO THE NAKED EYE HER FLESH IS UNMARKED, YET I SENSE DEEP SCARS-- RECENTLY MADE-- ACROSS HER BACK
THE PSYCHIC RESIDUE OF THESE WOUNDS IS UNSPEAKABLY FOUL DONAL, AS IS THE CREATURE THAT FORMED THEM
MARADA'S DREAM SUGGESTS THAT HE IS NOT FINISHED WITH HER
PAPA? GRANDMOTHER? WHAT'S GOING ON?

ARIANRHOD! WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP AT THIS UNGODLY HOUR DAUGHTER?
I HEARD A SCREAM. AND THEN THE WAR-TOCSIN SOUNDED I WAS CURIOUS I. WANTED TO HELP
THAT'S MY BRAVE GIRL
IT WAS ONLY A FALSE ALARM, ARI. NOTHING TO CONCERN YOURSELF WITH SO YOU CAN TURN AROUND AND MARCH STRAIGHT BACK TO BED
WAIT, DONAL. I DO NOT THINK MARADA SHOULD BE LEFT ALONE AND SINCE YOU AND I WILL BE BUSY REVIEWING ASHANDRIAR'S DEFENSES. WHY NOT LET ARI STAY WITH HER?
ALL RIGHT, MOTHER
GRANDMOTHER LOOKED GRIM. FATHER, TOO. WHATEVER MANIFESTED ITSELF TONIGHT MUST HAVE BEEN PRETTY IMPRESSIVE
IT WAS ONLY A DREAM
AROUND HERE, WE TAKE DREAMS SERIOUSLY
I'M ARIANRHOD AND YOU'RE MARADA
ARE YOU HURT? I'M A HEALER. I COULD TAKE AWAY THE PAIN
I WISH IT WAS THAT SIMPLE BUT I THANK YOU FOR THE THOUGHT
I'VE NEVER SEEN HAIR LIKE YOURS, EVEN AMONG THE NORSEMEN
I'M TOLD I'M UNIQUE MY MOTHER ASKED DEIPHOBE--THE SYBELLINE ORACLE AT CUMAE--ABOUT ME, AND WAS TOLD THAT I WOULD HOLD THE FATE OF THE WORLD IN MY HANDS. MOTHER BELIEVED HER
SO DID FOR A TIME.
THEY TALK THROUGH THE NIGHT EACH QUICKLY WARMING TO THE OTHER THE TWO OF THEM RELATING WITH SURPRISING EASE AND NATURALNESS THEY BEGIN AS TOTAL STRANGERS

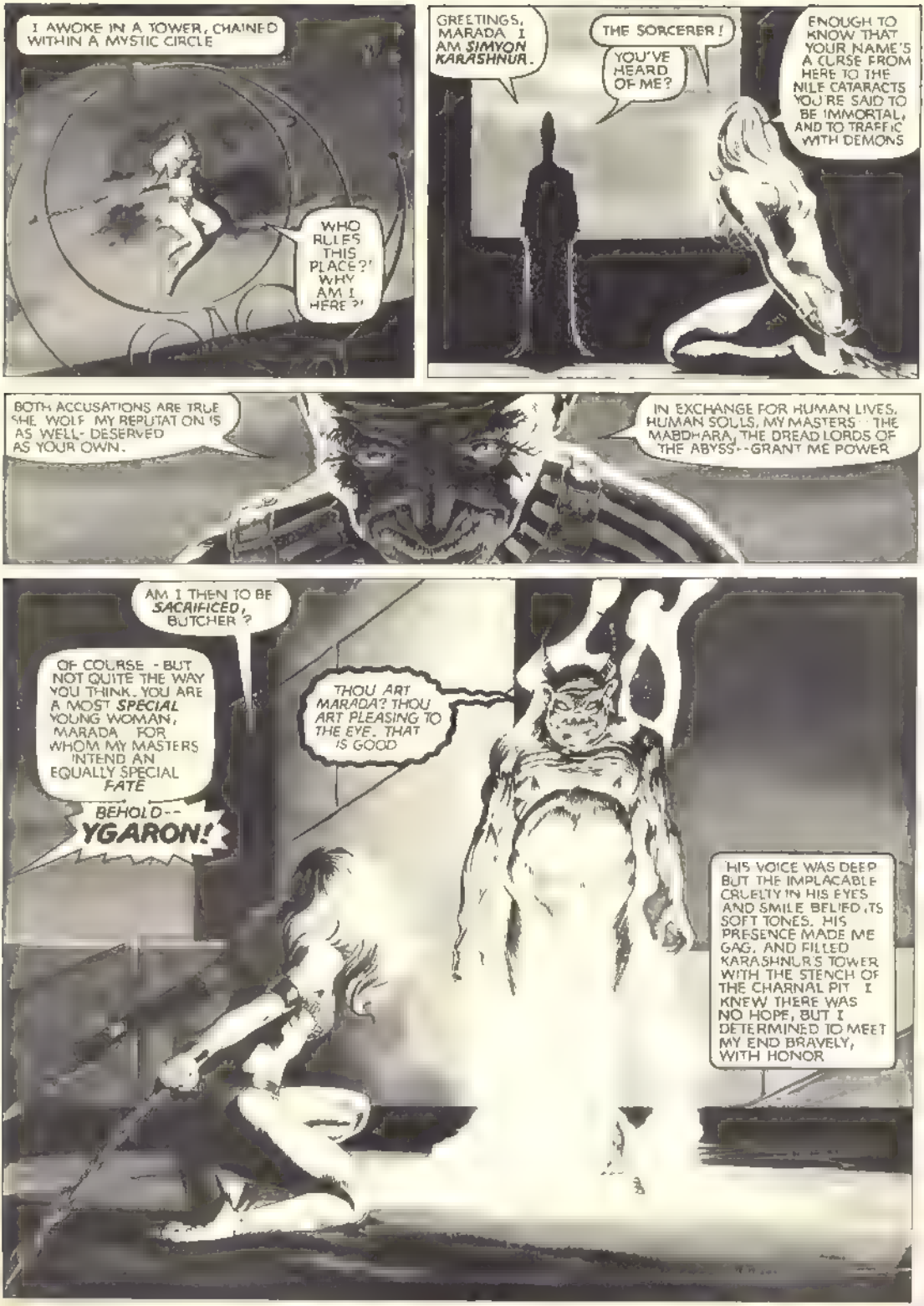
BY MORNING, THEY ARE FRIENDS
I READ THE DIVINE JULIUS' COMMENTARIES, ON HIS INVASION OF BRITAIN. HE SPOKE OF ASHANDRIAR AS A HOME OF THE GODS, LIKE MOUNT OLYMPUS
IT'S TRUE THIS IS A FAERY PLACE-- PART OF THE WORLD, YET APART FROM IT-- BUT WE'RE HUMAN ENOUGH-- TOO HUMAN, GRANDMOTHER THINKS
MY MOTHER DIED WHEN I WAS BORN FATHER AND GRAND MOTHER RAISED ME. THEY'RE TEACHING ME THE SCIENCES AND THE GREAT ART-- MAGIC, YOU'D CALL IT
BUT PAPA SEES DARK TIMES COMING. HE FEELS I SHOULD LEARN TO FIGHT-- AS BOTH SOLDIER AND LEADER-- AND WHO BETTER TO TEACH ME THAN THE WOMAN WHO ALSO HAPPENS TO BE ONE OF THE FINEST WARRIORS HE'S EVER SEEN.
ARE YOU REALLY THAT GOOD, MARADA?
ONCE A LIFETIME AGO
DID I SAY SOMETHING WRONG? I'M SORRY MARADA I DIDN'T MEAN TO PRY
IT'S ALL R GHT, LITTLE ONE.
ARI, CARE TO TRY YOUR LUCK WITH A BLADE?
THE TARGET'S AN AWFULLY LONG WAY OFF, RORY
JUST RELAX AND THROW, LASS - AS YOU'VE SEEN US DO
BONK!
YOU COULD HAVE DONE WORSE, ARI AT LEAST YOU HIT THE TARGET. NOT BAD FOR A START.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHOW ME HOW IT'S DONE, MARADA?
I
NO
THE SHE-WOLF IS DEAD, ARIANRHOD. THE WOMAN WARRIOR IS NO MORE I WILL NOT HOLD OR USE A WEAPON, EVER AGAIN
PLEASE DO NOT ASK ME TO
OR ASK ME WHY

ARI RESPECTS MARADA'S WISHES AND DOES NOT PRESS THE POINT
OVER THE DAYS THAT FOLLOW, SHE CONTINUES TO GUIDE HER NEW-FOUND FRIEND ON A TOUR OF THE GREAT FORTRESS THROUGH CHAMBERS OF WOOD AND STONE AND PUREST CRYSTAL, FILLED WITH ARTIFACTS FROM EVERY PART OF THE WORLD EVERY AGE OF MAN'S -- AND, INDEED, THE EARTH'S -- EXISTENCE
THE DAYS BECOME WEEKS; THE WEEKS MONTHS ACROSS THE FACE OF BRITAN -- AND EUROPE BEYOND -- IT IS WINTER YET WITHIN RHIANNON'S REALM THE TREES ARE GREEN, THE BREEZES SOFT, THE AIR THICK WITH THE HEADY SCENT OF WILDFLOWERS
ALMOST AGAINST HER WILL, MARADA FINDS HERSELF ENTHRALLED BY THE TIMELESS BEAUTY OF ASHANDRIAR SHE AND ARIANRHOD BECOME INSEPARABLE COMPANIONS AND, THROUGH THE GIRL, MARADA DISCOVERS THE MYRIAD, MADCAP WONDERS OF CHILDHOOD - AND A JOYOUS INNOCENCE THAT SHE HAD BEEN DENIED
GRADUALLY THE HARSH LINES FADE FROM HER FACE, THE HAUNTED HUNTED LOOK FROM HER EYES SHE FINDS THOSE EYES TURNING MORE AND MORE TOWARDS DONAL MacLLYANLLWYR.
AND DISCOVERS, TO HER SURPRISE, THAT WHEN HE SMILES, SHE SMILES BACK AND WHEN HE REACHES OUT TO HER
SHE DOES NOT PULL AWAY

Ooohhhhh THIS FEELS INDECENTLY DELICIOUS TADGH HAD ME EXERCISE FOR AN HOUR TODAY AND THEN RUN TWO ENTIRE LEAGUES!
I ACHE. NO I HURT!
WITH THE PAIN COMES STRENGTH SO THAT, WHEN YOU NEED YOUR BODY, IT WON'T IT WON'T, BETRAY YOU FAIL YOU
YOU SOUND SAD, MARADA S SOMETHING WRONG?
NO JUST MEMORIES -- THINGS I HAVEN'T THOUGHT OF IN QUITE A WHILE
YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT THIS HOT SPRING, ARI IT'S LOVELY
AND I'LL WAGER YOU'D RATHER BE ENJOYING IT WITH SOMEONE BESIDES ME A VERY SPECIAL SOMEONE
THAT'S ABSURD. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING AB--
OULFFF!
HAH!
YOU AND FATHER COULDN'T BE MORE OBVIOUS ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS IF YOU TRIED.
IS THAT SO? YOU'RE LUCKY I HAVE SOAP IN MY EYES.
ELSE I'D MAKE YOU EAT THOSE WORDS
MARADA!
Hmmh?
WHERE DID YOU GET THOSE TERRIBLE SCARS?!
THERE ARE NO SCARS
I CAN SEE THEM! YOUR BACK MUST HAVE BEEN LAID OPEN TO THE BONE!
THERE ARE NO SCARS!
DAMN YOU, ARIANRHOD!
MUST YOU PRY INTO EVERYTHING?! MY BODY MY PAST LIFE - LIKE MY FEELINGS FOR YOUR FATHER ARE PRIVATE THINGS OF CONCERN TO NO ONE BUT MYSELF!
MIND YOUR MANNERS, CHILD, AND LEAVE ME BE!
I'M SORRY, MARADA! I.. I DIDN'T MEAN--!
I'M SORRY!


ARI, WAIT! I..
. DIDN'T MEAN IT, EITHER
IT'S BEEN ALMOST A YEAR YET I STILL REACT AS IF IT HAPPENED ONLY YESTERDAY THE WOUNDS ARE SO RAW THAT I LASH OUT EVEN AT THIS CHILD I CARE FOR AS IF SHE WAS MY VERY OWN
THE MEMORIES SIT LIKE A CANCER WITHIN ME
A GANGRENE OF THE SOUL BEFOULING EVERY FACET OF MY BEING
GODDESS, WILL I NEVER BE FREE OF THEM?!
FREEDOM IS NOT A GIFT, STARHAIR. IT MUST BE EARNED, OR FOUGHT FOR
DONAL!
PLEASE I'D LIKE TO BE ALONE
THERE'S A TIME FOR SOLITUDE AND A TIME TO TURN FOR HELP TO THOSE WHO LOVE YOU.
I SAW ARI IN THE PASSAGE, SOBBING HER HEART OUT
I HURT HER
DELIBERATELY?
I COULDN'T HELP MYSELF
SHE SAID SHE SAW SCARS ON MY BACK. BUT THERE ARE NO SCARS MY FLESH IS UNMARKED
SHE'S A HEALER
SHE--LIKE HER GRANDMOTHER--PERCEIVES THINGS THAT OTHERS CANNOT. I SEE NO SCARS, YET I KNOW THEY EXIST- FOR I SEE THEM IN THE WAY YOU WALK AND TALK, THE TERROR IN YOUR EYES, THE TREMBLING IN YOUR HANDS
I WANT TO HELP- WE ALL DO-- BUT YOU WON'T LET US
WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT?
YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND - WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
RELAX, STARHAIR IT'S MERELY A MASSAGE AND BY THE BRIGHT ONE, YOU CERTAINLY NEED IT. YOUR SHOULDERS ARE STIFF AS SCULPTED MARBLE
MAKE ME UNDER STAND, MARADA. TRUST ME

THE FIRST LESSON I EVER LEARNED AS A CHILD WAS TO TRUST NO ONE
AS YOU WISH
I AM ROMAN, DONAL MY HOUSE IS OLD AND NOBLE EVEN NOW, MY SHAME CHOKES ME
YOUR FATHER VALUED COURAGE AS WELL AS PRIDE TO HIM, NO FOE - REAL OR IMAGINED WAS SO FEARSOME IT COULD NOT BE FACED
FOR A TIME, THE GROTTO IS SILENT THEN, HALTINGLY MARADA BEGINS HER STORY
"I WAS IN DAMASCUS HAVING LED A CARAVAN THE LENGTH OF THE SILK ROAD I AND THE WARRIORS OF MY ESCORT, HAD COMMANDEERED A TAVERN
WE WERE CELEBRATING OUR SAFE RETURN WITH A VENGEANCE
MY ALE!
I REMEMBER," DONAL SAYS SOFTLY "I WAS STANDING HOODED IN THE SHADOWS, AWAITING AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO YOU
YOUR PARDON, DECURION. INNKEEPER, ANOTHER FLAGON FOR OUR BRAVE LEGIONARY!
SHE-WOLF A FLAGON FOR YOU!
MY THANKS, FRIEND THIS DANCING MAKES ONE AS PARCHED AS A WEEK ON THE DESERT
"I DRAINED THE MUG TO THE CHEERS OF THE CROWD TOO LATE, I REALISED
"THAT THE WINE HAD BEEN DRUGGED
WHOA SHE WOLF! HAD TOO MUCH TO DRINK?
FEAR NOT I'LL SEE YOU GET HOME UNMOLESTED


I AWOKE IN A TOWER, CHAINED WITHIN A MYSTIC CIRCLE
WHO RULES THIS PLACE?! WHY AM I HERE?!
GREETINGS, MARADA I AM SIMYON KARASHNUR.
THE SORCERER!
YOU'VE HEARD OF ME?
ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT YOUR NAME'S A CURSE FROM HERE TO THE NILE CATARACTS YOU'RE SAID TO BE IMMORTAL, AND TO TRAFFIC WITH DEMONS
BOTH ACCUSATIONS ARE TRUE SHE-WOLF. MY REPUTATION IS AS WELL-DESERVED AS YOUR OWN.
IN EXCHANGE FOR HUMAN LIVES, HUMAN SOULS, MY MASTERS -- THE MABDHARA, THE DREAD LORDS OF THE ABYSS--GRANT ME POWER
AM I THEN TO BE SACRIFICED, BUTCHER?
OF COURSE - BUT NOT QUITE THE WAY YOU THINK. YOU ARE A MOST SPECIAL YOUNG WOMAN, MARADA FOR WHOM MY MASTERS INTEND AN EQUALLY SPECIAL FATE
BEHOLD-- YGARON!
THOU ART MARADA? THOU ART PLEASING TO THE EYE. THAT IS GOOD
HIS VOICE WAS DEEP BUT THE IMPLACABLE CRUELTY IN HIS EYES AND SMILE BELIED ITS SOFT TONES. HIS PRESENCE MADE ME GAG, AND FILLED KARASHNUR'S TOWER WITH THE STENCH OF THE CHARNAL PIT. I KNEW THERE WAS NO HOPE, BUT I DETERMINED TO MEET MY END BRAVELY, WITH HONOR

AH! DEFIANCE! COURAGE!
EXCELLENT! THOU SHALT MAKE A MOST FITTING CONSORT FOR THE TRIAD
CONSORT!?!
AYE!
DIDST THOU THINK ONE OF THE MABDHARA WOULD SET FOOT ON YOUR PATHETIC WORLD MERELY TO TAKE A HUMAN LIFE?
=UNNNGNH!=
I FOUGHT DONAL AS HARD AND FIERCELY AS I KNEW HOW WITH ALL MY STRENGTH AND SKILL
"TO NO AVAIL
"MY RESISTANCE PLEASED THE DEMON LORD HE DELIGHTED IN SHOWING ME
" HOW INEFFECTUAL IT WAS
"HOW HELPLESS I WAS

"IN HIS PASSION, THE MONSTER'S CLAWS RAKED MY BACK, CUTTING ME TO THE BONE. I THOUGHT, I PRAYED, I FEARED, THE WOUNDS WERE FATAL
"BUT WITH A CONTEMPTUOUS WAVE OF HIS HAND, YGARON HEALED ME
"YGARON TOOK PART OF MY SOUL AND REPLACED IT WITH A PIECE OF HIS-- SO THAT, WHEN THAT ENDLESS NIGHT FINALLY CAME TO AN END AND HE RETURNED TO HIS MAGGOT-RIDDEN REALM, I ... BEGGED HIM TO STAY
AGENTS OF THE TRIBUNE GAIUS MARCELLUS FULVA FREED ME FROM KARASHNUR'S PALACE. FULVA MEANT TO SEND ME TO ROME. THE REST YOU KNOW
YOU UNDERWENT A TERRIBLE ORDEAL, MARADA BUT YOU SURVIVED.
MY BODY SURVIVED
SINCE CHILDHOOD I'VE PRIDED MYSELF AND DEPENDED ON MY ABILITY TO DEFEND MYSELF AGAINST ANY FOE, SURMOUNT ANY OBSTACLE. BUT YGARON TOOK ME AGAINST MY WILL, AND THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO.
BETTER I'D BEEN A MEEK, MILD, COMPLIANT WENCH - WHO ACCEPTS SUCH VIOLATIONS AS A FACT OF LIFE - THAN TO HAVE DREAMED OF BEING SOMETHING BETTER
ONLY TO SEE THAT DREAM SHATTERED
YOU'RE TOO HARD ON YOURSELF. NO WARRIOR IS INVINCIBLE. WE ALL HAVE FOES WHOM WE CANNOT DEFEAT
AND AFTER SUCH A DEFEAT, DONAL, IS YOUR SOUL TWISTED INSIDE OUT?
AND ARE YOU SO TERRIFIED OF IT HAPPENING AGAIN THAT YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON WHAT YOU ARE?!
WHAT AM I, DONAL? WARRIOR? WOMAN? BOTH? PERHAPS IT WAS FOOLISH OF ME TO THINK MY SKILL AT ARMS MADE ME SAFE, INVIOLATE. I DON'T KNOW
AT LEAST NOW I HAVE NO ILLUSIONS

MARADA THE SHE-WOLF continues next issue

" FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, IT HAS BEEN MY GREATEST WISH -
- TO ESCAPE FROM THE COLD METAL PERFECTION OF THIS BODY, TO LEAVE BEHIND ME THE LIFE OF A ROBOT AND BECOME A HUMAN BEING
HEART AND STEEL

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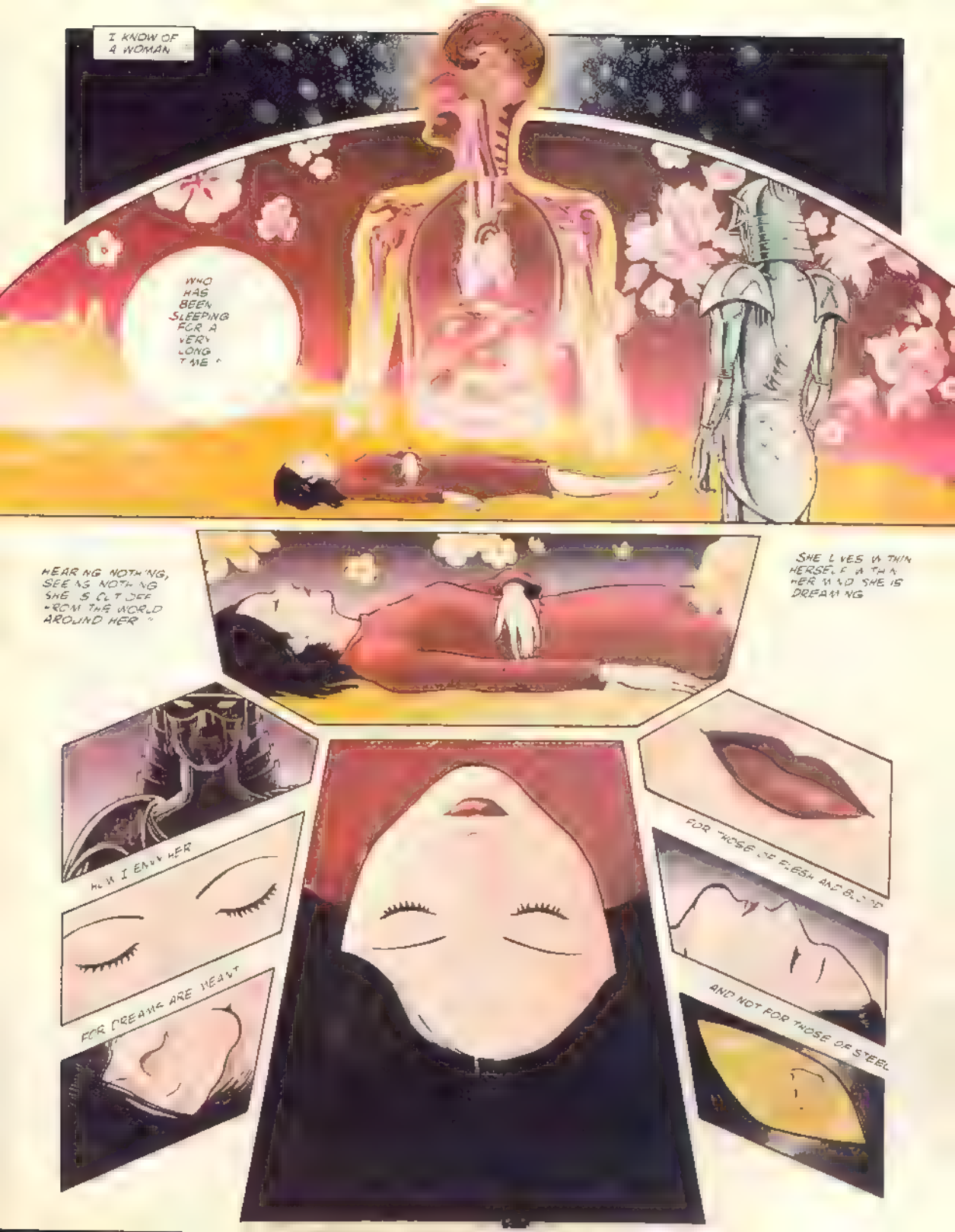
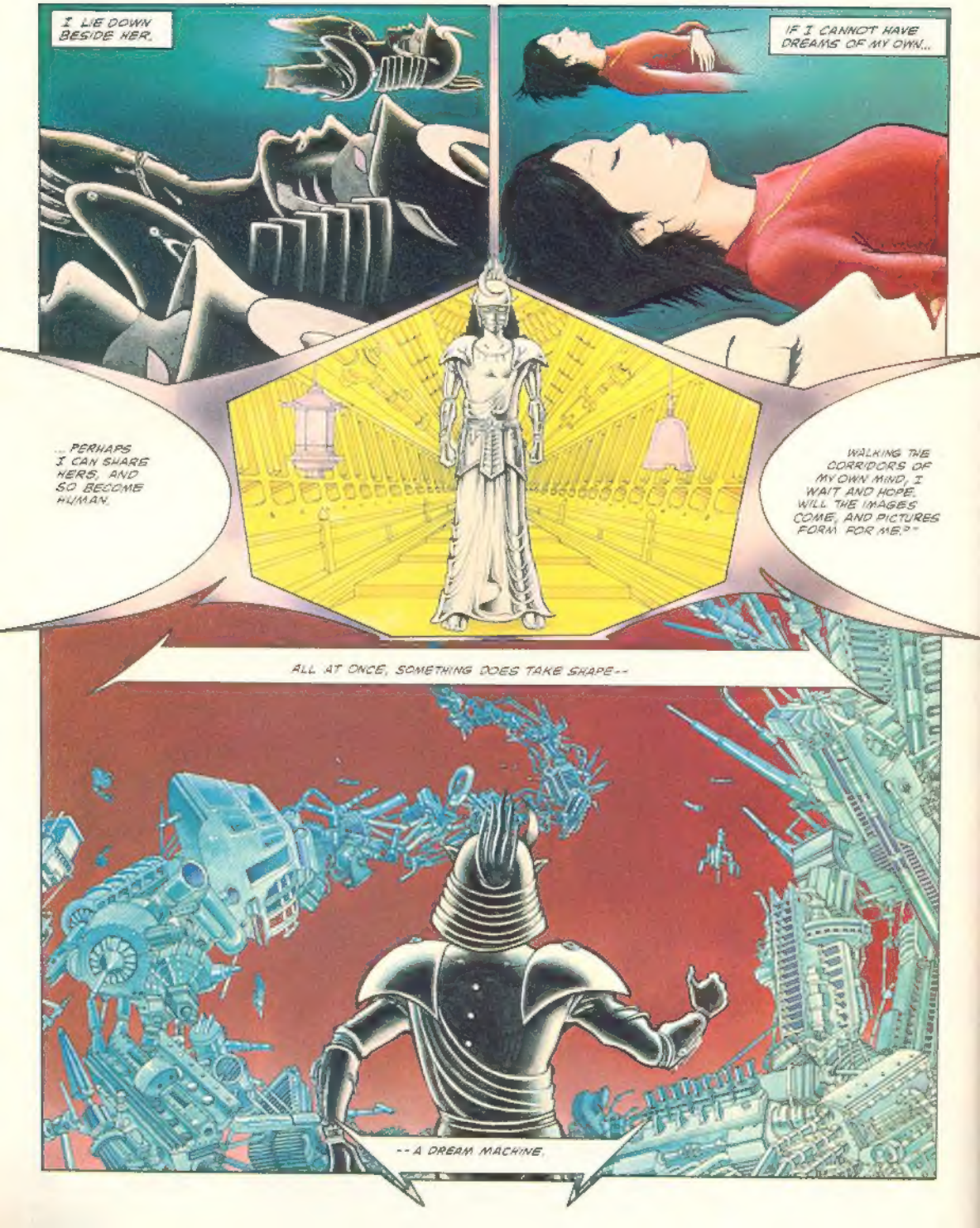

I KNOW OF A WOMAN
WHO HAS BEEN SLEEPING FOR A VERY LONG TIME.
HEARING NOTHING, SEEING NOTHING SHE SLIPS AWAY FROM THE WORLD AROUND HER.
SHE LIVES WITHIN HERSELF AND HER MIND SHE IS DREAMING
HOW I ENVY HER
FOR DREAMS ARE MEANT
FOR THOSE OF FLESH AND BLOOD
AND NOT FOR THOSE OF STEEL


I LIE DOWN BESIDE HER.
IF I CANNOT HAVE DREAMS OF MY OWN...
...PERHAPS I CAN SHARE HERS, AND SO BECOME HUMAN.
WALKING THE CORRIDORS OF MY OWN MIND, I WAIT AND HOPE. WILL THE IMAGES COME, AND PICTURES FORM FOR ME?"
ALL AT ONCE, SOMETHING DOES TAKE SHAPE--
--A DREAM MACHINE.

IT IS NOT WHAT I WANTED. I FLEE THROUGH THE UNENDING METAL AND MACHINERY, TRYING TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS TECHNO-LOGICAL NIGHTMARE...
...BUT EACH PATH-WAY, EACH DOOR THAT I OPEN, HOPING TO FIND THE SECRET OF HUMANITY, DRAWS ME INTO HER DREAM...
... AND THEN SENDS ME PLUNGING BACK AGAIN.

AND I ASK MYSELF WHY I CANNOT ESCAPE MY CONNECTION WITH THIS HUMAN BEING, WHY MY DREAMS ARE DOMINATED AND OVERRUN BY THINGS OF METAL, OR WHY I, A THING OF METAL MYSELF, SHOULD HAVE EVER WISHED FOR HUMANITY.
THE IMAGES BROUGHT FORTH BY MY DREAM OVERWHELM ME, AND I CANNOT CONTAIN THEM!
I NO LONGER KNOW WHETHER I AM A ROBOT WHO WISHES TO BECOME HUMAN...

... OR A WOMAN WHO IS DREAMING SHE IS A ROBOT."